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NOTES ON  
*THE TESTAMENT OF*  
*BEAUTY*



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*THE TESTAMENT OF  
BEAUTY*

By NOWELL CHARLES SMITH

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## PREFACE

THE object of this book is simply to assist those readers of *The Testament of Beauty* who feel the need of assistance. It owes its existence to the demand and encouragement of my sister Mrs. Humphrey Milford and my friend Miss Monica Sanctuary, both of whom desired the elucidation of the philosophical language and historical allusions in which the poem abounds, and very kindly read my notes in manuscript and 'passed' them as, in general, supplying the sort of help they required. It is common knowledge that the poem, though arousing wide-spread enthusiasm by the splendour and exquisite beauty of its diction and the prophetic vigour of its avowal of the poet's faith, contains much both of matter and of phraseology which is puzzling to those who have not had a fairly thorough philosophical and historical training. It is to these that I venture to offer such help as I can. My object has been explanation, not criticism; but it is often impossible to explain without in some measure criticizing; and as a whole-hearted admirer of the poem, which has affected me more powerfully than anything since I first read *The Prelude*, I have not been meticulously anxious to avoid all expression of disagreement. Doubtless I shall sometimes seem to have obscured the obvious, sometimes to have left obscurity unilluminated. In this regard I can only echo the apology of that very sensible and honest expositor, Dr. Johnson: 'I have endeavoured to be neither superfluously copious, nor scrupulously reserved, and hope that I have made my authour's meaning accessible to many who before were frightened from perusing him, and contributed something to the publick, by diffusing innocent and rational pleasure.'

The Index is primarily an index to the notes, but I should not have thought it worth adding but in the hope that readers would find it useful in locating phrases and passages in the poem itself, the exact position of which I find often escapes my own memory even after many readings. •



Besides the two friends mentioned above, I desire to express my cordial thanks to Mrs. Bridges for her patient kindness in answering many questions on matters of fact, to my very old friend and first teacher in philosophy, Mr. H. W. B. Joseph, for counsel and information given in his own thorough and self-forgetful manner, to Mr. A. B. How and other friends for helpful discussions, to my son Mr. Simon Nowell Smith for assistance in reading the proofs, and finally to the University Printer and his staff for their Argus-eyed protection of my reputation for sense and syntax.

N. C. S.

I have taken the opportunity of a new impression to correct a date on pp. 10 and 12, a misprint on p. 19, a misquotation on p. 26, a grammatical slip on p. 38; to improve the notes on p. xi and on Bk. III, 581; to add a note on Bk. III, 458-61 (see p. viii); and to re-write the last note on p. 54—an amendment due to a friendly critic in *The Times Literary Supplement*.

The strengthening of the evidence on p. x, in regard to the origin of the title of the poem, I owe to my friend Dr. Bruce Richmond, who remembers Robert Bridges expressing to him his admiration of Ralph Hodgson's *Song of Honour*.

October 1931.

N. C. S.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

ROBERT SEYMOUR BRIDGES was born on 23 October 1844. His childhood was passed at Walmer on the coast of Kent. From 1854 to 1863 he was at Eton, where he played in the Oppidans' Wall and Field football teams. From 1863 to 1867 he was at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He stroked the College Eight and obtained a Second Class in the Final School of Lit. Hum. ('Greats'). The first slender sheaf of Shorter Poems was published in 1873. It was true of him, as he says of Man in The Testament of Beauty, that

*'Beauty is the prime motif of all his excellence,  
his aim, and peaceful purpose.'*

From this purpose he never wavered, but he was convinced that he would be a better poet if he learned and practised some profession which brought him into active contact with human life and particularly with the investigations and achievements of Natural Science. Accordingly, after travelling in Egypt and Syria and spending eight months in Germany, he became a medical student at 'Barts'. Here he was casualty physician in his fourth year. He was subsequently assistant physician at the Children's Hospital in Great Ormond Street and physician at the Great Northern Hospital till 1882. He travelled in France, the Netherlands, and Italy, making an Italian tour with his friend Harry Ellis Wooldridge (afterwards Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford), who lived for some years in the same house with him in London.

In 1881-2, after an attack of pneumonia, he wintered in Italy and Sicily. He then gave up his medical work and settled at the Manor House, Yattendon, making a home at first for his mother. In 1884 he married Monica, daughter of Alfred Waterhouse, R.A. They had one son and two daughters.

The years at Yattendon were very productive. All the plays after the Prometheus were written here, as well as many of the Shorter Poems, the treatise on Milton's Prosody, and the

*first experiments in quantitative hexameters. Moreover, Bridges undertook the training of the village choir and in conjunction with Wooldridge brought out the well-known Yattendon Hymnal.*

*In 1905-6 he spent nine months in Switzerland for his wife's health; then, after occupying several temporary abodes, he built Chilswell House on Boar's Hill near Oxford, where he lived a life of poetry and of many-sided literary activity for nearly a quarter of a century. In 1913 he was made Poet Laureate. In 1924 he and Mrs. Bridges spent some months as guests of the University of Michigan, U.S.A. In 1929 he received the Order of Merit, and also published *The Testament of Beauty* on his eighty-fifth birthday. Early in the following year he revised the text of the poem for the second English edition. He died on 21 April, 1930.*

## ADDENDUM

*Book III, 458-61. Mrs. Bridges tells me that I have mistaken the meaning of these lines and that they still refer to the young mother who is the subject of ll. 452-7. 'Her precocious girlhood' then means the early maturity and ability to perform the functions of a mother which is part of a girl's endowment. Mrs. Bridges refers me to the poem *Our Lady*, in *October and other Poems* (1920), stanza ii, ll. 40-4:*

*To woman it fell to be early in prime,  
Ready to labour, mould, and cherish  
The delicate head of all Production,  
The wistful late-maturing boy  
Who made Knowing of Being.*

*This passage well illustrates ll. 452-7: but the difficulty of ll. 460-1, and especially the clause 'as it grew in the brutes', seems to me even greater on Mrs. Bridges' interpretation than on mine; and I still think, though with diffidence, that the poet passes from the literal motherhood of ll. 452-7 to that metaphorical motherhood which is a normal factor in a woman's love.*

## INTRODUCTION

*The Title.* For a long time, while engaged upon his great poem, Robert Bridges used to speak of it as his *D.H.N.* (i.e. *De Hominum Natura*), with allusion to the famous philosophical poem of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*. He could not find a title to his mind, until one day he came down to breakfast and announced that he had got it—the name was to be ‘The Testament of Beauty’. There is no doubt about the felicity of the title, which is itself a bit of poetry, a jewel four-words-long (to vary Tennyson). About the *precise* meaning of the phrase there is more doubt, as there is apt to be about such phrases. It is safe to say that there is a reference to the fact that the poem is the ‘last will and testament’, as it were, of the poet of over eighty years of age. With a full sense of responsibility he leaves to posterity this high and serious statement of his philosophy of life, his religious faith. And the purport of this statement is ‘of Beauty’. It concerns Beauty; nay more—and here comes in another stream of association to make part of the meaning of the title—it is also the *testimony* of Beauty, the witness borne by Beauty to the truth that reality is good or, in the traditional language of Christianity, that God is Love. For, although the *O.E.D.* may be justified in saying that ‘testament’ is ‘erroneously’ used as a synonym of ‘testimony’, nothing can rob the word of its derivation from the Latin word for ‘bearing witness’ and the associations of that meaning. And no one can read the poem through with any degree of understanding without realizing that such is its purport. It is throughout the poet’s witness to his faith, which faith is founded on Beauty’s witness to the love of God. And indeed the other idea associated with the word ‘testament’ is not entirely absent, that of ‘covenant’. Beauty is the sign and symbol of God’s covenant with man; and again, as the poet says (IV. 1123):

This hankering after lost Beauty, in sickness of heart  
a disconsolate sentiment, is the remnant grace  
of nature’s covenant, the starved germ *athirst for God*  
*ev’n for the living God.*

## INTRODUCTION

Such are, I believe, the implications of the title, which is not susceptible of more precise definition. But it is a curious fact that Ralph Hodgson, in his noble and well-known *Song of Honour*, anticipated the phrase:

I heard the hymn of being sound  
 From every well of honour found  
 In human sense and soul:  
 The song of poets when they write  
 The testament of Beautysprite  
 Upon a flying scroll,  
 The song of painters when they take  
 A burning brush for Beauty's sake  
 And limn her features whole . . .

If Robert Bridges had been conscious of Ralph Hodgson's phrase when he bethought him of his title, he would no doubt have said so: but he greatly admired the poem, which he included in his *Chilswell Book of English Poetry*, and no doubt the phrase had sunk into that unconscious memory from which so much of our speech wells up. Ralph Hodgson calls the song of poets 'the testament of Beautysprite' written 'upon a flying scroll', which must mean the sworn testimony or the sacred message of the Spirit, which we call Beauty, which is entrusted to poets to proclaim abroad. The expression 'Beautysprite' is somewhat *outré*, the associations of the word 'sprite' being very different from those of 'spirit' for which it is substituted, and the compound 'Beautysprite' or 'Beautyspirit' being unnatural. Readers will differ as to whether the poet 'carries off' his 'fetch' or not by the energy of his enthusiasm: poets can usually do what they like with our judgement when once they have engaged our sympathy, as Bridges himself proves in many a wayward phrase and use of a word in the *Testament of Beauty*. At any rate, all readers with any literary sense will feel that the coincidence between these two poets' use of the phrase is, if pure coincidence, very exceptional; just as they will feel that no more felicitous and suggestive title could have been found for Bridges' poem.<sup>1</sup>

*The Subject and Treatment.* It would serve no purpose to give an elaborate account of the poem here. Though it expresses the philosophy of the poet, it is not a systematic treatise. It has indeed a living unity, an inner logic of its own; and even on the surface it is far more methodical and consecutive than collections of lyrical utterances like *In Memoriam* or sonnet-sequences like Bridges' own *Growth of Love*. But, for all that, it would be impossible to give an intelligible connected analysis of the poem without frequently supplying extraneous matter, suppressing apparent irrelevancies, and in general forcing the interpretation. Moreover—what is more important—in this as in all true poems the meaning cannot be divorced from the expression. 'No doubt there are passages of which one can give the gist in prose, and there are many passages which one can help oneself and others to understand

\* Since this book was in print I have read Mr. Garrod's lecture on *The Testament of Beauty in Poetry and the Criticism of Life* (1931). Mr. Garrod there (p. 132) suggests that Bridges was influenced in his choice of a title by Gower's lines in *Confessio Amantis* (Book VIII, ll. 2941 foll. ed. Macaulay), in which Venus bids Gower command Chaucer

'That he upon his later age,  
To set an ende of alle his werk,  
As he which is myn owne clerke,  
Do make his testament of love' . . .

or by the actual title of a prose treatise by Thomas Usk, *The Testament of Love*, which was at one time attributed to Chaucer. I feel sure that Bridges was not conscious of such influence, any more than of Hodgson's phrase: but I agree that the influence was there, especially in view of Bridges' intimacy with Henry Bradley, the discoverer of Usk's authorship. Unluckily Mr. Garrod has made a slip which his authority is likely to propagate widely. He writes: 'Mr. Bridges uses the word *breed* in the sense of *sex*. Is it mere accident that it is so used already by Usk?' It would be remarkable if it were; but in fact it is not. Usk writes 'brede' and 'breed' where we write 'bread'. The passage on which Mr. Garrod's error is founded is presumably the following, in the last paragraph of Usk's treatise: 'If breed, thorow vertue, is mad holy flesshe, what is it that our God sayth?' The 'breed' here spoken of is, as of course Mr. Garrod will see on a moment's reflection, the bread used in the Sacrament of the Mass. So the use of 'breed' in the sense of 'sex' remains, as far as I know, the arbitrary invention of Robert Bridges.

by paraphrase and explanation;—that is the object of this book. But such prosaic assistance serves only to place the reader as near as possible to the poet's point of view, to remove accidental obstacles which might otherwise prevent his following the poet's vision or being carried along by the impetus of the poet's thought. Neither my interpretations nor any one else's give the meaning of the poem. They only help, if they are fortunate enough, to put the reader, when he needs help, in a position to receive that meaning—which is the poem itself.

Philosophical argument—and *The Testament of Beauty* is full of argument—is not, in general, suitable material of poetry. In so far as philosophy is simply 'love of wisdom', a passionate striving of the human spirit for answers to its inevitable questions, almost all great poets are philosophers; and the answers which they get and pass on to others, however fragmentary, do more in fact to encourage and fortify the human spirit than the completest theories of philosophers who are not poets. But poets proceed mainly by intuition, by imagination, by the expression of concrete momentary experience, not by systematic reasoning and the excogitation and correlation of abstract principles. Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe have probably taught more wisdom to mankind than all the philosophers since Plato: but neither they nor the innumerable other true poets, whose 'love of wisdom' has been the most elevating influence in the world, have expressed themselves in ostensibly philosophical or didactic poems. Lucretius, and perhaps Pope, are the only obvious exceptions in western literature. There have been many other versified treatises on the nature of things, on God, on Man, on the Soul, on the Universe. But nobody reads them either for their poetry or for their philosophy, the reason being not that their authors were feeble philosophers, which they often were not, but that they were not real poets. Pope was not a real philosopher, but he was a real poet: Lucretius was both. Robert Bridges was both, as the

general character of his writings before the *Testament of Beauty* indicated. Whether he has succeeded in expressing his philosophy in a didactic poem (which, as we have seen, he familiarly called his *De Hominum Natura*) which will live in the hearts and minds of poets and lovers of poetry, as the didactic poem of Lucretius lives, time alone will show. Lucretius has the great advantage of having secured a niche in the spacious temple of the ancient Muses. Bridges has to take his chance in the incessant output of the modern printing-press. Lucretius again is the poet of one of the outstanding scientific theories of the universe. Will the same be said of Bridges centuries hence? Some will smile at the mere question: but here again it is time alone which, as Pindar says, 'proves by trial the very truth'.

It is, however, certain that *The Testament of Beauty* is a philosophical poem which bases itself upon the theory of Evolution popularly associated mainly with the name of Darwin, as definitely as the *De Rerum Natura* based itself upon the atomic theory of Democritus as developed by Epicurus.<sup>1</sup> It is also true that *The Testament of Beauty* is the first attempt of a poet to express a definitely reasoned aesthetic theory of life. Aesthetic has always been the Cinderella of philosophic studies. The pure intellectual curiosity of philosophy has always been liable to be coloured by the pragmatic aim of achieving peace of mind. It has tended to study the feelings quite as much in order to control as to understand them. While truth and goodness beckon the philosopher to the 'pure serene' in which he hopes to breathe at ease, beauty awakes those disturbing emotions which, at least if he is more philosopher than poet, he prefers to forget. Christian morality, on the whole, has reinforced, with an emphasis quite alien to the apparent temper of its founder, that hostility to sensuous beauty which the experience of his frailty has constantly engendered in struggling man. Beauty is suspect because of its

<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that Bridges follows any particular philosopher with the literal fidelity with which Lucretius follows Epicurus. •



companionship with pleasure. There has been an age-long antagonism between morals and religion on the one hand and art and poetry on the other. The earlier phase of the Renaissance was an attempted harmony; but it was soon broken up. The High Renaissance stands over against the Reformation as Art without conscience against Morality without taste. It is only as a result of the liberating force of the scientific spirit that Beauty has begun to vindicate its place in the trinity of the absolute values. Thus it has come about that *The Testament of Beauty* is the first great didactic poem of aesthetic philosophy, and as such it seems likely to have an historic advantage over other long poems in the ever-increasing stream of literature.

The following short account of the contents of the poem may be helpful for reference and by way of a preliminary bird's-eye view of the country to be traversed. Much of it will be found repeated, often verbatim, in the notes, wherever I have felt that a reader of the text was likely to need such assistance and would find it inconvenient to refer to this Introduction.

Book I is, as it is entitled, an *Introduction*, placing the reader at the poet's point of view from which he contemplates that Beauty in the Universe which moves him so strongly, and ponders the mystery of man's consciousness and nature's apparent contradictions.

**I-336.** The relation between Beauty and Reason: 'Man's generic mark' is his 'spiritual elation and response to Nature' (l. 318).

**120-3.** Strike the keynote of the whole poem:

Man's happiness, his flaunting honey'd flower of soul,  
is his loving response to the wealth of Nature.  
Beauty is the prime motiv of all his excellence,  
his aim and peaceful purpose; . . .

This is the ultimate fact to which *The Testament of Beauty*

testifies. Why is there any *need* to testify? The reason follows at once (ll. 123–8):

- ... whereby he himself
- becoming a creator hath often a thought to ask  
why Nature, being so inexhaustible of beauty,  
should not be all-beauteous; why, from infinit resource,  
produce more ugliness than human artistry  
with any spiritual intention can allow?

129–222. Reason cannot solve this problem, but it is only by reason that one can judge reason. Reason, though so ‘small a thing’ in ‘Nature’s plan’ or in ‘Universal Mind’, and though so ‘tickle’ or ‘delicat’, depending as it does, upon human life, is yet ‘Nature’s prescriptiv oracle’ (l. 146). Reason is ‘nascent also in brutes’, but to so small a degree that ‘because human sorrow springeth of man’s thought’ men often envy the unreasoning care-free brute creation. But the greater part of pleasure is equally due to Reason:

Wherefore I assert:—if Reason’s only function wer  
to heighten our pleasure, thatt wer vindication enough;  
For what wer pleasur if never contemplation gave  
a spiritual significance to objects of sense,  
nor in thought’s atmosphere poetic vision arose?

223–336. Reverting to the problem of evil, the poet is led on to the ‘mystic vision’, without which such a problem would not exist, and which itself ‘beareth assurance of the diviner principle implicit in Life’.—This is illustrated from the story of St. Francis of Assissi, which again leads on to a characteristic ‘poetic vision’ of landscape and skyscape, and a wonderful *coda* about ‘the child’s eyes of wonder’ in Rafaël’s Christ of the Sistine Madonna.

337–500. The main purpose of this section is to assert the unity or homogeneity (same-sort-ness) of the universe, and in particular the continuity of man’s ‘characteristic faculty’

of 'conscient Reason' with the rest of Nature:—cp. especially ll. 365–72:

Not emotion or imagination ethick or art  
logic of science nor dialectic discourse,  
not ev'n thatt supersensuous sublimation of thought,  
the euristic vision of mathematical trance,  
hath any other foundation than the common base  
of Nature's building:—not even his independence  
of will, his range of knowledge, and spiritual aim,  
can separate him off from the impercipient.

'Four stages' are recognized 'in all existence'—

Atomic, Organic, Sensuous, and Selfconscient (l. 428).

The small and insecure part of the Selfconscient, or Reason, is again emphasized (ll. 437–70), though once again the foundations of existence are as unquestionable as they are indefinable (ll. 450–6); and the section ends with a reminder of St. Thomas Aquinas, which forms a pendant to that of St. Francis before.

**501–790.** The Introduction takes a fresh start and proceeds to illustrate and comment on the work, the limitations and the failures of Reason in the course of history. It ends (ll. 616–790) by describing how 'Wisdom', who is

the essential Beauty of Holiness,  
pass'd her creativ joy into the creature's heart,  
to take back from his hand her Adoration robes  
and royal crown of his Imagination and Love.

In other words it treats of the arts and philosophy, and, while paying tribute to the wonders of Egypt, attributes in splendid poetry their own unique glory to the Greeks.

### *Book II. Selfhood*

**1–41.** The poet conceives the soul of man, as Plato did, in the image of a charioteer and two horses. For Bridges the charioteer is Reason, whose function and limitations have

been already described in Book I, but will be constantly recalled throughout the poem; the two horses are Selfhood and Breed, which are described in Books II and III.

**42-530.** *Selfhood: Mother and Child.* The poet traces 'the Essence of Self' from the very elements of nature, even the atom, up through plants and animals to reasoning man. He finds in Motherhood the spring of man's purest affection (l. 125), and proceeds by contrast to describe the life of those 'egg-breeding insects' from which Nature has 'with-held the gift of Motherhood'. The main point of this section (ll. 183-447), is to express the poet's abomination of any sort of communism or equalitarianism. Some of the most significant words in the whole poem are the following (ll. 204-10):

the high goal of our great endeavour  
is spiritual attainment, individual worth;  
at all cost to be sought and at all cost pursued,  
to be won at all cost and at all cost assured;  
not such material ease as might be attain'd for all  
by cheap production and distribution of common needs,  
wer all life level'd down to where the lowest can reach.

**448-530.** The first part of the book ends with a description of the growth of intelligence in the child up to manhood, of the part played by Reason and the need that Reason should be sustained by faith—the 'faith in the order of Nature and that her order is good' of which the poet has spoken in I. 562-3.

**531-1001.** *Selfhood: War and Art.* War and Art are two conspicuous fields of Selfhood, self-assertion, self-expression. As a poet Bridges is naturally preoccupied with Art; and War is the great spectre of our world-view to-day. The argument hardly admits of analysis. The poet describes (ll. 531-692), the combative instinct, notes the combative effect of the parental instinct, and the attraction of War for Poetry; and is baffled by the contradictions of Reason itself in regard to these things.

693-839. He is thus led again to consider the development of Reason from fundamental unconscious Selfhood, and so to its relation to Art and the combination of sense-perception and spiritual emotion (l. 825) on which Art depends. This leads to a re-interpretation of the Platonic term 'Ideas', which he renames 'Influences',

eternal Essences that exist in themselves,  
supreme efficient causes of the thoughts of men (ll. 838-9).

Here too is the very core of the poem, the 'Testament of Beauty' in its briefest form (ll. 840-7):

*What is Beauty? saith my sufferings then.*—I answer  
the lover and poet in my loose alexandrines:  
Beauty is the highest of all these occult influences,  
the quality of appearances that thru' the sense  
wakeneth spiritual emotion in the mind of man:  
And Art, as it createth new forms of beauty,  
awakeneth new ideas that advance the spirit  
in the life of Reason to the wisdom of God.

69-1001. The last part of the book reverts to War, which Reason regards as ranking 'with those things that are like unto virtue, but not virtue itself', and 'so long as men be savage' retaining

its old glory untarnish'd—heroism,  
self-sacrifice, disciplin, and those hardy virtues  
of courage honour'd in Brasidas, without which  
man's personality wer meaner than the brutes.

The book ends with sad and stern meditation not only upon the Great War itself, but upon

mankind's crowded uncleanness of soul  
that brought our plague!

### *Book III. Breed*

**1-162.** Book III opens with a reminder that the image of the charioteer and steeds is only an image and that the supposition

of two separate instincts, Selfhood and Breed, is only a construction of the mind; that, e.g.

- in Nature's economy the same impulse  
may work to divers ends, as demonstrably is seen  
in the appetite of hunger.

This leads to a digression on 'Pleasur in Food', which needs no analysis here. The subject of the book 'Breed' is taken up at l. 151. This is not merely 'Breed' in the strict sense of propagation of the species, but the differentiation of Sex and 'nature's intention' therein. In fact, the love of men and women is the principal subject of Book III.

**163-86.** Not merely propagation but 'the enrichment of the species' appears to be

the purpose of natur in the segregation of sex;

though this does not, in the poet's view, make the regulation of human mating a practicable proposition.

**187-324.** We cannot perceive the origin of sex, but we can trace its evolution from plants to the highest stage at which we know it in man. The poet dwells then on this highest stage, of which Dante's spiritual love of Beatrice is taken as the great example. He finds Beauty, both sensuous and spiritual, closely connected with sex, and illustrates his theme not only from Dante, but from Lucretius and Shakespeare, and concludes that the 'high beauty of spirit'

when once 'tis waken'd in the mind  
needeth no more support of the old animal lure,  
but absolute in its transmitted power and grace  
maketh a new beauty of its own appearances.

But this supremacy of spiritual love does not degrade sensuous Beauty, 'who is herself mother of heav'nly Love' and 'among Goddes best gifts'.

**325-420.** The difference between the male and the female.

in respect of sexual attraction and passion. The question why 'bodily beauty is deem'd a feminine attribute' leads to a digression on the evolution of agriculture from the most primitive, perhaps matriarchal, times to the latest inventions of machinery. But at any rate since patriarchal times

that the fair Muses  
should hav masculin wooers was Apollo's will . . .  
and man, finding elation in physical beauty  
and in the passion of sex his chief transport of soul,  
ascribed supremacy of beauty to woman's grace,  
and she to'ardly accepted his idolatry.

**421-39.** 'tho' true loves are mutual', yet the passion of the woman is different from that of the man and is penetrated by the 'deeper purpose' of Motherhood.

**440-77.** This deeper purpose is further described, especially its influence upon the young male lover.

**478-740.** The poet describes with rich poetic embroidery the struggles with Puritanism on the one hand and Paganism on the other through which Christian marriage came to be the 'stablish'd ordinance' and 'sacrament' which it is. This section does not require and hardly admits of analysis: its difficulties are dealt with in the Notes.

**741-63.** The poet proceeds to expound the function of beauty in relation to 'breed' in the same sort of way as he has expounded it in relation to 'selfhood', especially in the latter part of Book II. The parallel is indicated here by a brief recapitulation of the argument that though 'the motive of Selfhood' would have been quite enough to account for 'mankind's love of life', yet actually 'the vision of beauty awaited' man and 'step by step led him in joy of spirit to full fruition'. Just in the same way though the mere differentiation of sex 'was attended thru'out by necessary attractions', yet actually man 'learn'd in beauty to transfigure love'.

**764-842.** In passing, he dismisses the objection that 'Science'

knows nothing of 'beauty' with an allusion to Leibniz' famous doctrine of the 'pre-established harmony', and goes on

to tell

- how female beauty came to be the common lure in human marriage.—First in animal mating the physical attractions, as they evolved with sense, took-on beautiful forms, til beauty (as in bird-song) was recognized consciently and exploited by art, and after in man became that ladder of joy whereon slowly climbing at heaven he shall find peace with God.

When once this sense and desire of beauty has become a part of man's soul it will be inflamed 'in whatever his spirit is most moved';

and thus in his 'first love'

physical beauty and spiritual are both present mingled inseparably in his lure.

From this the poet is led to reflect upon the 'idolatry' and the often disillusioned hopes of lovers, and in his outspoken manner, but with less raillery than sometimes on rather similar occasions, to express his disapproval of attempts to 'impugn the credit' and loosen the bonds of 'christian marriage'.

**843-951.** 'Mere impulse of sex . . . is not the bond of marriage'.

the happiness in marriage dependeth for-sure  
not on the animal functions, but on qualities  
of spirit and mind that are correlated therewith.

The myth of the creation of Eve is true in the sense that woman is the 'indispensable comrade', 'of spiritual aid' to man, as the 'Essenes' and 'Puritans' realized in spite of the fact that in them

motiv and lure of breed wer wholly extinct.

Reflection on the contrast, yet coexistence, in man of asceticism and hedonism leads to a highly original and vivid picture of 'the aristocracy of our English motherhood' and



the attitude of 'our common folk' towards it—which needs no analysis. But as to the need of man which woman supplies, represented in the old myth by Adam's lost rib,

'twas no unique, ultimately separable thing,  
as is a chemic element; far rather our moods,  
influences and spiritual affections are like  
those many organic substances which, tho' to sense  
wholly dissimilar and incomparable in kind  
are yet all combinations of the same simples. . . .

Thus Selfhood and Breed combine in various ways to produce our moods, &c., as carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen combine to produce organic substances. But leaving this analogy the poet surmises that

there is no human faculty  
that hath not been in long elaboration of sex  
adjusted finely,

so as to become characteristic of one or the other sex. But human faculties are thus adjusted to 'richer ends' than mere sex-attraction, so that they do not merely subserve 'the impulse of Breed—as some' (sc. the Freudians) 'deem'.

**952–1001.** Woman's spiritual intuition contrasted with man's logical and scientific tendency to materialism. Once more the need of faith, and the old conflict between man's judgement of nature and his spiritual sense of beauty—already treated in Book I.

**1002–57.** The poet deals briefly with the gradations from blind animal passion to the vision of Spirit, and with varieties of sexual love due to temperament, education, climate, religion, &c.

**1058–1137.** The book ends with a brilliant passage on painting, landscape-painting, and Titian's famous picture commonly known as 'Sacred and Profane Love'.

*Book IV. Ethick*

**1-90.** Book IV treats of

that science, call'd Ethick, dealing with the skill  
and manage of the charioteer in Plato's myth,

viz. Reason. This Ethick is necessary, because, even though Beauty does dawn upon many human souls in childhood, its influence is too evanescent to prevent the instincts returning to their old 'animal ruts', unless the individual is fortunate both in disposition and in environment until Reason has matured and become disciplined and enabled to order the instincts and emotions.

**91-361.** *Of Duty.*

91-130. Duty is identified with 'necessity become conscient in man', the law of nature which runs through universal nature from the atom to the consciousness which is capable of the vision of God, the Universal Mind, from which the universe originates.

131-82. The evolution of duty 'from physical to moral ends'. Education shapes morality. Duty is extended by Reason's refinement of the instincts. Animals show some rudiments of moral choice, but

moralists teaching virtue as an end-in-itself

repudiate any motives such as may be supposed to move animals and any utilitarian motives at all; though in fact virtue itself is

no less useful, nay more requisit  
than is material comfort to our full happiness.

183-207. The poet refutes those who deny the validity of any and every 'Ethick' on the ground of the merely contingent character of morality.

208-58. Unless 'Ethick' is based upon the aspiration to wisdom of good disposition educated by beauty, it is 'a thing of hap without place in Reality'. Mere customary ethics, based

upon animal and material aims, may have some 'moral tendency upward'. But anyhow 'Duty instill'd with order', sc. social, traditional, conventional duty, is apt to turn Habit into Law, and to enslave 'the common folk' to outworn social codes. Hence the need of Teachers, Prophets, Saviours of society, to uphold and propagate the true 'Ethick'—a doctrine which 'sticklers for equality' reject as conflicting with their doctrine of natural progress.

259–361. In parenthesis, the poet remarks that not merely these equalitarians, but 'no Politick', not even the Church when its hierarchy became politically minded, 'admitteth the teacher into confidence'. Politics always base themselves on the lower, conventional ethics, which are really only the old animal passions domesticated for material safety and comfort. This leads on to the thought that 'Socialists' (whom Bridges identifies in accord with popular usage with 'levelers', 'sticklers for equality') imagine themselves 'Teachers', but are not aware of the difference between the lower and the higher ethics. They 'preach class-hatred as the enlighten'd gospel of love', but if they would study history they would find how little progress 'social virtue', the lower 'Ethick', has made since the civilization of Ur of the Chaldees in the seventeenth century B.C. Here occasion is taken for a brilliant description of the recent finds of excavation in Mesopotamia. Hindu Suttee, Henry VIII's wife-slaying, the inconsistency of 'Victorian' anti-slavery crusades and neglect of London slums, are drawn in to enforce the attack upon the lower 'Ethick', which in the poet's prejudice is associated specially with 'Socialist' views.

**362–594. *Of Pleasure.***

362–83. As Duty is to Selfhood, so is Pleasure to Breed, but Pleasure also has 'its main stronghold in Self', in the form of that 'Life-joy' which is the very index or measure of the Self's health and success.

384–405. Hence naturally came the theory of Hedonism, that pleasure was the aim of conduct, which, however, is

rejected equally by 'men in the street and schoolmen', who are agreed that some pleasures are good, some bad.

406-33. 'The prime task of Ethick' then is to distinguish between good and bad pleasures: but first the poet explains very clearly why Pleasure, 'being the champion of our integrity' (the Life-joy), 'should in the event appear virtue's insidious foe'. With the growing consciousness of pleasure man elaborated it, and

bloating it with luxury,  
invented and indulged vices unknown to brutes;

So that Moralists went to the other extreme and banned it 'as the pollution of virtue'.

433-532. A vivid memory of an incident in the poet's intercourse with the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins sets going a stream of exquisite poetry, in which the poet, giving full credit to the asceticism of true Saints, yet argues cogently against 'repudiation of pleasur' and against any 'distinction of kind 'twixt Pleasur and Happiness'.

533-66. Happiness is the pleasure which accompanies the 'higher energies' of man. It is consonant with that theory of the continuity of the Universe and of emergent evolution which Bridges maintains throughout, that happiness should thus be regarded as the highest form of that 'pleasur in life' which he finds already in the life of plants (l. 378). It is also sound Aristotelian doctrine, as Bridges takes pleasure in remarking.

567-94. Moralists can distinguish broadly between good and bad pleasures, as between virtues and vices, but there is a great 'uncharted jungle' of casuistry, i.e. of conduct which cannot be generalized, where all one can say is that

a good man wil go right,  
while an ill disposition wil miss and go wrong.

This leads on to a brief, witty and humorous allusion to Comedy and to children's books, forming a *coda* to the first half of the book.

**595-721. *Disposition and Education.***

595-638. The imitative propensity of the human child is the means whereby Nature disposes man towards a good disposition, since the child is most powerfully drawn

and held by the inborn love of Beauty unconsciously of preference to imitate the more beautiful things.

This leads to 'the habit of virtue', and thus a child well-bred in good environment comes to form an ideal of himself which he endeavours to realize.

639-59. Hence the importance of beauty in the nurture of the young, and the danger, if beauty be not supplied, of the imitative faculty seizing upon evil in its 'hunger of mimicry'. Christ's teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven, the sanctity of childhood, and the sin against the Holy Ghost, is consonant with this doctrine.

660-87. This 'emotionable sense' of beauty is secretly 'touch'd to awareness' and drawn within the attraction of the ultimate creative Mind in a way which no investigation of 'infinitesimals' by Science can achieve. Thus

while the intellectual faculty is yet unborn,  
spiritual things to children are even as Music is.

And in fact initiation and progress in virtue is for children analogous to initiation and progress in Music; and in both cases that teacher is most keenly followed who is 'an exemplar'.

688-721. The poet lightly passes over intellectual training as not properly part of his subject, only repeating the familiar criticism of the traditional education that it thwarts the natural spiritual development of youth and tends to stupefy the child.

**722-60.** Whether comparatively effortless or struggling virtue be the more admirable, is not of great practical importance, as there is little difference between the great majority of us in this matter.

The same incarnat traitor routeth in all hearts,

viz. 'carnal pleasure', which is often a severer temptation to 'the elect' because of the refinements with which their 'aesthetic delicacy' disguises its evil. Hence the apparent 'ease' of some saintly characters is no result of 'indolence', but of 'disciplin of deadly strife'. Where men fail to resist temptation we may suspect 'indolence' rather than

any unwonted virulence or rage  
of the onslaught; for thatt same happeneth anon to all.

**761-1137.** *The Poet's Theory of Mind.*

761-80. Introductory. The poet will enter the 'secret penetralia' or innermost sacred 'grove' 'of ethic lore', and attempt a theme hitherto unhandled in poetry—viz. that inquiry into the nature of mind which Socrates started with his 'Know thyself'.

781-833. 'The spontaneous functions and motions of life, such as the flight of birds, digestion, or acquired dexterities which have become automatic,

all act in response  
to external stimulants that vary in kind, and range  
from mere material contact to untraceable thought.

There is no separation of sensation and thought. Every thought affects what the poet calls 'the corporat mind' and 'thatt swarming intelligence where life began'. The human being is an organized whole of parts which are in themselves 'organities' [For further explanation see the Notes];

and wheresoe'er this corporat alchemy is at best,  
'tis called by all men GENIUS, and its aptitudes  
like virtuous disposition may be inherited.

834-68. Now this spontaneous life oweth nought to Reason. . .  
for every Essence hath its own Idea, and so  
cometh thereby to its own full conscient life in man:  
for-sure the idea of Beauty is not Reason's idea,  
nor hath Reason the idea of Courage or of Mirth.

Reason's own idea is that of Order, and as Order is found throughout the Universe, Reason was naturally led to

imagine wrongly that every Idea was subordinate to her. Thus Pythagoras thought 'NUMBER to be the universal essence of things'; Mathematics, Science, Philosophy, all aim at reducing everything to order and system:

and 'twas thus Socrates  
could evoke Reason to order and disciplin the mind.

869-77. A parenthesis. The docility of the mind to Reason is called by English moralists the 'Good Will'; this is really in the poet's view simply the instinct of Selfhood evolving towards spiritual aims of Truth and Virtue and Beauty.

878-937. The poet resumes the exposition of the nature of man's mind. He repeats his doctrine of the continuity of mind and body, and of mind as the gradually evolving consciousness in the Ring of Reality (above ll. 112-30). The human intellect is 'form'd and compact of the essential Ideas'. If a mind

held all ideas in plenitude  
'twould be complete, at one with natur and harmonized  
with as good harmony as we may find in nature.

But actually no human mind is thus complete, but all are imperfect and all differ one from another, both individually, and with certain generic differences, produced by environment, &c., such as nationality.

938-42. On the other hand 'men commonly run so near to the average' because

the animal ideas are common property.

943-57. simple characters hav such extreme beauty  
for that the soul's nobility consisteth not  
in riches of imagination or intellect  
but in harmony of Essences.

958-86. The 'old dilemma of Art'—that Art which is imitation of Nature yet surpasses Nature—is rebutted by the fact that

man's faculty of creation, rare in him  
and not at his command, is but Nature herself.

987-93. The relation between Art and Nature is most direct  
in music, but is more easily understood in poetry,

wherein each verbal symbol exposeth its idea.

994-1006. True Art cannot be 'simulated', but there are  
many 'grades' of it, from the self-expression of the ideas of  
genius to the humblest 'jingle of words' which may express  
a man's sense of beauty, 'fix his hold on joy', 'fasten his faith  
on God'.

1007-25. Inasmuch then as the ideas in any one mind  
are a promiscuous company muster'd at random,

there will be disorder for Reason to amend: and though  
Reason is so fallible as we have seen, we do not discredit her  
any more than we discredit fallible medicine.

1026-42. 'The common ailment of Mind' is 'a lack of  
harmony' among the Ideas, resulting in folly and weakness  
of will: the will being no separate force, but 'the concentra-  
ting of a predistributed intrinsic power' of 'the emotions,  
passions and desires, concurrent with the Ideas'.

1043-64. This leads to a paragraph on the Will, which,

in the good mind a sustain'd harmony,  
is in the bad a dissonance, or it may be a strange  
co-ordination, or the tyranny of one idea.

This last kind of will is seen when a 'demagog' inflames 'the  
herd' with some 'mighty essential idea'. The idea may be  
good, but the propagation of it may be attended with evil,  
and

all human activities  
may be order'd equally for ravage or defence,

so that the poet is led to ask himself how he can trust that  
Reason's mere ordering of life can make for happiness; but  
he answers that he believes it does.

1065-137. This great passage concludes the exposition of the  
nature of man's mind. The poet recapitulates his account



of the evolution 'from inconscient existence' to 'spiritual conscience', and declares that Reason eventually will

order discreetly the attitude of the soul  
 seeking self-realization in the vision of God,  
 becoming at the last that arch-conscience of all,  
 to which the Greek sage who possess'd it made appeal.

As individuals we are drawn into this upward motion of Reason by our consciousness of it, in other words our love of wisdom and beauty. The attitude of those who are thus attracted will be

joyful obedience  
 with reverence to'ard the omniscient Creator  
 and First Cause, whose Being is that beauty and wisdom  
 which is to be apprehended only and only approach'd  
 by right understanding of his creation, and found  
 in that habit of faith which some thinkers hav styl'd  
*The Life of Reason.*

This is true Religion, truly identical with Duty—though Religion has turned to such superstitions as to justify the famous saying of Lucretius: 'So great a load of evils has Religion passed upon man's acceptance'; while, adds Bridges, the negative character of the materialistic revolt against religion has brought about a recrudescence of superstition—and also a 'hankering after lost Beauty' which shows itself in such a movement as that of garden-cities. The transitions are abrupt, but easy enough to follow in the text. The conclusion the poet comes to is that

in truth 'spiritual animal' wer a term for man  
 nearer than 'rational' to define his genus.

**1138-63.** There follows a section on Prayer, which needs no detailed analysis. The poet speaks of the instinctive turning to prayer 'in any strain of heart or great emotion of soul', of its effect on character, of its difficulty, and its use as an athletic exercise, as it were, of the soul.

**1164-236.** He passes on to consider the appropriate attitude,

gestures, accompaniments of prayer, and in a striking and characteristically picturesque passage compares and contrasts the effect of the emotion of prayer upon a Lenten congregation or a Moslem host with other herd emotions, such as the excitement of a football crowd.

**1237-52.** But even the dignity of prayer in companies of men is renounced by some mystics, and, though such 'appear to lack in use and duty of fellowship', it may be that their solitary contemplation

of very intensity  
generateth ideas of higher irradiance

which pass from soul to soul freely and constitute the 'communion of saints'.

**1253-67.** An afterthought to the whole section on mind. The mind perishes with the body unless it be true that there is a further stage of evolution in which mind passes beyond body. In that case it may be that in this or that human mind

the personal co-ordination of its ideas  
hav won to Being higher than animal life . . .  
with conscience entering into life everlasting.

**1268-446.** *The Conclusion.* Just as the poem opens with the description of a mood of rapt wonder and renewed initiation into the joy of life and

the domination of Nature's secret urge,  
so the conclusion is introduced by a waking dream experienced when the poet had taken refuge from a mortal distress in the beauty of a sunset. The dream is an allegory, to the effect that all the poet's reasonings are, after all, incapable of revealing that truth in which nevertheless his faith is sure: for

verily by Beauty it is that we come at wisdom,  
yet not by Reason at Beauty.

So it is time for him to stop, for Beauty is the Testament of God's love, and

not the Muse herself can tell of Goddes love.

1314—the end. From this point the poet begins the actual *coda* of the poem, recalling some of his most deeply-felt ideas, and, while retaining his firm hold on facts and logic, ending in a passionate strain of spiritual exaltation. The main theme of the passage is the most perfect form of human love, that pure friendship, which is the sublimation of both Breed and Selfhood, and finds its exemplar and its assurance of immortality in the friendship of Christ, in the fellowship of which friendship

God is seen as the very self-essence of Love.

Further analysis of this *coda* seems unnecessary. Such difficulties as occur in it, are discussed in the Notes.

*The Spelling, Punctuation, Verse, and Diction.*—To readers familiar with the previous work of Robert Bridges, none of these elements in *The Testament of Beauty* will present any new difficulties. But to others they each and all present stumbling-blocks—of which, however, the magnitude is much exaggerated by prejudice, inertia, and gossip.

1. *Spelling.* The first thing that strikes the reader's eye is the peculiar spelling. Bridges was deeply interested in attempting to arrest the decay of the English language, in regard to both pronunciation and usage. He was the founder of the 'Society for Pure English', and laboured both by precept and example in the cause. Part of the method of preserving the language was the simplification and regularization of spelling; and, to promote this, Bridges worked out a system of his own, including the addition of new letters to the alphabet for the better differentiation of sounds. It would be out of place to discuss the matter here, especially as in *The Testament of Beauty* Bridges introduced no new letters and made no violent changes from ordinary standard spelling. Such changes as he did make are explained in the so-called 'publisher's note on the text' which appears at the end of the poem—'so-called' because it is really the author's. As it is to be presumed that any one who is in any way offended by the

spelling will read that note, it may be helpful to some readers to explain one statement in it. The poet retains the ordinary spelling of the word 'nature', 'except in those places where it suffers liquid synaloepha in the prosody'. In non-technical language this means where the final syllable of 'nature' is followed without any perceptible pause by a vowel, so that the two actually coalesce or run together. The easiest way to understand this is by example, and I take the first occurrence of 'Natur' without the *-e*, I. 688:<sup>1</sup>

And every divination of Natur or reach of Art.

Contrast this with the first occurrence of 'Nature' with the *-e*, I. 44:

I felt the domination of Nature's secret urge.

It is probably the opinion of most critics that it is a pity that the poet set up any barrier of unfamiliar spelling between his unusual and often abstruse poem and the understanding of the reader. Undoubtedly the strange appearance of the text has deterred a good many persons from beginning to read the poem: but it may be doubted whether any one who is actually turned away by so slight an 'offence' would be likely to take the trouble to read such a poem with understanding, even if the spelling had been normal. In point of fact the peculiarity of the spelling is of no importance whatever to the reader who pays no attention to it.

2. *Punctuation.* With the punctuation and the use of capitals it is somewhat different. In both of these Bridges has ways of his own. All is deliberate, nothing slipshod; but he seems sometimes wayward and sometimes inconsistent. As, however, obscurity very rarely, if ever, arises from either of these causes, and as my experience seems to show that few people pay much attention to punctuation, there is no need to discuss the matter here.

<sup>1</sup> The argument of course applies to all words analogous to 'Nature', i.e. ending with the syllable '-ure' unaccented. Thus in Book I before we come to 'Natur', we have 'pleasur', 'measur', 'architectur' and others.

3. *Verse*. The verse is a more important matter. In these days of endless experiment in versification—a movement which Robert Bridges himself did as much as any poet to set on foot, particularly by his *Shorter Poems* which began to appear as long ago as 1873—the ordinary reader of poetry is not likely to be taken aback by a first glance at *The Testament of Beauty* as he would have been fifty years ago. Yet I have heard people say that they do not ‘understand the metre’ or that they ‘do not know how it is meant to be read’. To which the answer is: ‘Read it aloud, with no attention to anything but the sense and that pause, often infinitesimal, which is implied by the ending of each line. If you do this, you will find, either at once if you are quick of ear, or with a little perseverance if you are not so quick, that the poem *reads itself*’. I can only say that in a life largely given to reading aloud I have never come across a long poem which was easier to read aloud—and that by reason of the strength and yet flexibility of the rhythm, which accompanies the movement of the thought and keeps pace with all the changing moods of argument, description, irony, tenderness, and rapture. This being so, an elaborate examination of the versification would be out of place here. It is enough to say that the poet himself speaks of his verses as ‘my loose alexandrines’ (II. 841), by which he means verses freely varied on the base of the old line of twelve syllables, called by the French ‘alexandrine’ from its use in medieval romances of Alexander the Great. Bridges was an even more devoted student of prosody than of language, and he recognized in Milton the greatest master of English versification. For some years he had, among other experiments both in accentual and in quantitative prosody, practised what he called ‘neo-Miltonic syllabics’, or, in *Poor Poll* (1921),

my well-continued fanciful experiment  
wherein so many strange verses amalgamate  
on the secure bedrock of Milton’s prosody.

The earliest of these ‘syllabics’ date from the years 1913 and appear in the volume called *October and other poems* published

in 1920. In a note at the end of that volume the poet gives a technical and somewhat difficult explanation of the relation of his verses to 'the model left by Milton in *Samson Agonistes*', and ends by saying, 'It is probably agreed that there are possibilities in that long six-foot line which English poetry has not fully explored'. The first seven poems of the volume of *New Verse* published in 1925 show further exploration. The metre is much more freely handled and justifies the term 'loose alexandrines'; and indeed we may note in passing that these poems contain many thoughts and turns of expression which are afterwards taken up into the fabric of *The Testament of Beauty*.

For those readers whose curiosity as to the versification desires a little more satisfaction I append the following note: but of course if any one wishes to study the subject he will read what the poet himself wrote about it.

In what may be called the normal or standard line there are twelve syllables and six stresses; as in

I. 13. with líke surprise of jóy as ány mán may knów.

But there are comparatively few lines of precisely this rhythm; and the variety is almost infinite, from the slightest difference, as in

I. 3. we saíl a chángeful seá through hálcyon dáy and stórm;  
in which 'halcyon' is scarcely more than a dissyllable; through noticeable, but slight, variations, as in

I. 14. who rámbing wíde hath túrn'd, résting on sóme hill-top:  
in which the fourth foot (so to speak) is inverted, and there is strictly no sixth stress, but a distribution of it between the two syllables 'hill-top'; and more marked variations, as in

I. 1. Mórtal Prúdençe, hándmaid of dívíne Próvídençe:  
in which the movement is predominantly falling rather than rising, and the sixth stress is not so much a stress as the slight drag of the end of a phrase and line, while in 'handmaid' the stress is almost distributed between the two syllables; to variations of the utmost freedom, such as

I. 76. illfímitable unséarchable and of heávenly ímport:

a line of sixteen syllables and only four full stresses, though no doubt the final syllables of 'illimitable' and 'unsearchable' carry slight stresses: or

- I. 133. for a philosophy conformable to truth:  
 I. 186. Corruption of best is ever the worst corruption:  
 I. 209. But the sensuous intuition in them is stéril,  
       210. 'tis the báre clóth whereon oúr rích bánquet is préd:  
 I. 220. snáth'd from their reách—but hé sítting with the  
       dainties  
       óut-sprédd befóre him would seé them, nor éver feél  
       ány desíre nor mémory of their óld rélish.

Besides all the varieties of 'loose alexandrines' there are about thirty lines, scattered through the poem, but nearly half of them in Bk I, of the metre commonly known as blank verse, iambic pentameter or five-stress lines. More often than not, the poet employs these lines to close a period (as at I. 275-6, 456, 500), where they are so effective that one wonders why he did not use them rather more often.

4. *Diction.* This is not the place for a disquisition upon the diction of Robert Bridges, tempting as it is to expatiate upon a Muse's garden as rich, as interesting, as exquisitely ordered and tended as those of Spenser, Milton, Keats, Tennyson, or any of the pre-eminent artists and lovers of words, in the long line of English poets. For this is what Bridges was first and foremost, an artist, and an artist working in the medium of words. *The Testament of Beauty* is, as we have seen, a philosophical poem, and the author's whole soul is in the subject-matter of it. But it is the soul of an artist, and he could not change it, even if he had ever dreamt of doing so. What he felt, by the way, about the compulsion laid upon the artist by his nature is indirectly shown by his remark about those who have given themselves to philosophy (II. 755-6):

they must lack vision of Art  
 (for elsewhere they had been artists, not philosophers).

Like Virgil, Goethe, Wordsworth, Shelley, he had a strong inclination towards philosophy; but he had an overmastering

passion for musical speech. And his philosophic, scientific mind directed the working of this passion into endless experiments in rhythm and diction, as well as ceaseless investigation of pronunciation. Some of the results, such as his quantitative hexameters, his peculiar spelling, and the more marked examples of unusual diction, have undoubtedly so far been too much for the ordinary reader, even of poetry, and have invited terms like 'pedantry' from unsympathetic criticism. The truth is that Bridges, like Milton, was a learned poet, a highly intellectual poet, and a poet of aristocratic taste and temper. Some of his lyrics, like some of Milton's, appeal by their sheer beauty even to the simple and unlearned: but for the most part he might well have echoed Milton's 'fit audience find, though few'. Neither of these genuine artists was wilfully bizarre or wilfully obscure; but they would only be judged by their peers—not their peers in genius or creative power, but in knowledge, taste, and judgement.

For our purpose now, however, all that seems necessary is a practical word or two on the diction of *The Testament of Beauty*. The reader will naturally expect to find many philosophical and scientific terms in a poem which sets forth an aesthetic and moral philosophy in the light of an evolutionary theory and of modern psychology. For the most part Bridges uses these terms as other philosophers do: and I would only warn any reader who is untrained in philosophic studies that it is necessary, if one would understand the arguments and expositions in the poem, to attend to the *exact* meaning in their context of words like 'essence', 'nature', 'reason', 'spirit', 'sense'. But there is one word which Bridges uses in a way peculiar to himself among modern English writers: viz. 'Conscience'. 'Conscience' in *The Testament of Beauty* invariably means what we ordinarily call 'Consciousness':<sup>1</sup> and it naturally plays a great part in the poem, with 'conscient', 'consciently', and their negatives. The first place at which I have noted this use of 'Conscience' in Bridges

<sup>1</sup> This is of course the meaning of the French word 'conscience'.



is in the *Later Poems*, no. 12, *To Thos. Floyd* (dated 1906), l. 131:

Like man's immortal conscience of desire.

The phrase 'conscient Reason', which occurs a number of times in *The Testament of Beauty*, is used in the *New Verse*, no. VII. *Come si quando* (1921), l. 118. The obvious reason for adopting the word 'conscience' for 'consciousness' in verse is its greater euphony, especially if the word has to be used frequently. In *The Testament* 'conscience' occurs about thirty-one times, 'consciousness' five; 'conscient' about sixteen, 'conscious' once; 'consciently' twice, 'consciously', not at all; 'inconscient' six, 'unconscient' once, 'unconscious' four; 'inconsciently', 'unconsciently', 'unconsciously', once each.

For the rest it cannot be too firmly grasped that Bridges chooses every word for its place with extreme nicety and sensitiveness to its derivation and associations. Many of the finer points of style, as well as often the plain sense of a passage, will be lost if we are content to take words merely in their debased and outworn currency. Moreover Bridges was so intimate a lover of language that he often took liberties with it, coining uses, phrases, even perhaps occasionally words, and, short of coining, often giving words and phrases unusual turns of suggestion. It is probable that most readers of this poem will be prepared for the idiosyncrasies of the diction by familiarity with the poet's other work. It would swell this Introduction unjustifiably if I were to give examples here. They will be found on every page of the poem itself, and will add greatly to the pleasure of connoisseurs in the art of verbal expression. Where help seems likely to be required, I have attempted to give it in the Notes.

One last word on the point where versification and diction meet, viz. the use of rime and assonance. All melodious poetry depends greatly on assonance, i.e. on the distribution of similar sounds and sounds which blend agreeably—with due

attention to variety and even occasional dissonance for special effects. Bridges is always choosing his words, phrases, syntax, under the influence of his intense sensitiveness to sound. By the time he came to write the *Testament* no doubt his choice was more often than not instinctive: but every page also bears witness to conscious and often elaborate selection. Rime, on the other hand, he uses very little in this poem. There are less than thirty-five examples, and of these I have noted only four in what may be called the traditional use at the end of lines. These are at II. 302-3; 513-4; III. 674-5; IV. 77-78. The most noticeable type is as follows:

'waving in gay display their gold-heads to the sun' (I. 30).

'to awake and fill and thrill their myriad-warbling throats (I. 70).

Rather more often he bisects the line with a rime:

Them soon the jealous Day o'er-rideth to display (I. 297).

The effect of his riming is generally to impart impetus to the rhythm; the most notable example is the following, describing what happens if the charioteer, Reason, loses heart (II. 509 foll.):

But heav'nward tho' the chariot be already mounted,  
'tis Faith alone can keep the charioteer in heart—  
Nay, be he but irresolute the steeds wil rebel,  
and if he looketh earthward they wil follow his gaze;  
and ever as to earth he neareth, and vision cleareth  
of all that he feareth, and the enemy appeareth  
waving triumphant banners on the strongholds of ill,  
his mirroring mind will tarnish, and mortal despair  
possess his soul. . . .

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The motto preceding the list of contents is from Virgil, *Georgics* II. ll. 475-7, and is literally translated: 'For me first of a truth I pray that the Muses, sweet before all else, whose sacred things I bear in utter rapture of mighty love, receive me'. •



## Book I. INTRODUCTION

**i-336.** The relation between Beauty and Reason. 'Man's generic mark' is his 'spiritual elation and response to Nature' (l. 318).

**i-7.** These lines indicate the temper in which the poet addresses himself to his enterprise. He is calm and self-assured, but recognizes the limitation of human powers. He is conscious of using an opportunity which he neither created nor foresaw, but for which nevertheless the master-purpose of his life, the pursuit of wisdom and beauty, has prepared him.

**6.** In the 1st ed. *wisdom*, in the 2nd *conduct*. The word is used in its obsolete sense of 'skilful conduct', 'prudence', 'discretion'. Cp. Dryden (quoted in *O. E. D.*) 'Thus conduct won the prize when courage failed'.

**8-36.** Late in life he had a spiritual experience which he describes:

a glow of childlike wonder enthral'd me, as if my sense  
had come to a new birth purified, my mind enrapt  
re-awakening to a fresh initiation of life.

He compares this experience, which was purely spiritual (the journey and path of ll. 8, 9 being metaphorically used for the course of life, just as in the opening lines of Dante's *Inferno* which are evidently in the poet's mind), to two similar experiences partly spiritual, but partly sensuous (ll. 13-18 and 19-36). The meaning is quite clear till the last few lines.

**31.** *inconscious* = unconscious. Bridges habitually prefers the rare form 'conscient' to the common 'conscious'. See *Introd.* p. xxxvii.

**34.** *threw aside*: not 'discarded' but, as we more often say, threw off.

**35-6.** The poet says that every common wild flower is a perfect creature or expression of God's will, like the master-pieces of art thrown off by painter or musician. Both kinds, the flowers of nature and the works of art, are 'supreme in

themselves, eternal' (i.e. their beauty, as such, is timeless), 'unnumber'd in the unexplored necessities of Life and Love'—there being an innumerable quantity of such things in the unexplored fields of what necessarily springs from Life and Love. It is just possible that Bridges used 'necessities of Life and Love' for 'necessary relations between the two principles of Life and Love', 'necessities' being used with a consciousness of the Latin *necessitudo*: but I think Life and Love compose one concept and mean God, who is Life and Love: and the 'necessities' are the necessary creations or consequences of that being God's nature.

**37-56.** In the mood thus described of intense and, as it were, re-born pure intuition the poet feels 'the domination of Nature's secret urge, and happy escape therein'—something analogous to the mood described by Wordsworth in the *Tintern Abbey* lines, when

with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony and the deep power of joy  
We see into the life of things.

**57-87.** The poet goes on to meditate about the relations between Reason or Intellect, man's distinctive characteristic, and the senses and instincts, particularly the instinct of music which he shares with the birds. Reason is absolutely dependent upon sense, as a debtor that can never be discharged (l. 57); her loftiest dreams (ll. 75-6) depend upon the animal senses (l. 62 foll.) and their physical organs and environment (l. 77 foll.).

**60-1.** This thought recurs more fully expressed in the passage on the epicure at the beginning of Book III. One may compare *In Memoriam*, liii.

Hold thou the good: define it well:  
For fear divine Philosophy  
Should push beyond her mark, and be  
Procuress to the Lords of Hell.

and the tenor of *The Palace of Art*.

74-81. Cp. *The Tapestry*, ll. 15 foll. (in *New Verse* (1926)), of the eye:

Such is the joy of the eye, that dark conduit whereby  
the swift creative ray, offspring of heavenly fire,  
steals to the mind, wakening in her secret chamber  
vast potencies of thought which there lie slumbering  
in the image of God.

**88-105.** The tradition of bird-song (exquisitely described) leads the poet to reflect 'how deeply seated is the urgency whereto Bach and Mozart obey'd', &c.

98. The allusions are to the *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles and Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*; and 'the sick heart of Keats' echoes 'the sick heart of Ruth'.

**106-19.** A passing thought on bird-flight and man's new aeronautics.

**120-8.** The poet now strikes the key-note of the whole poem.

Man's happiness, his flaunting honey'd flower of soul,  
is his loving response to the wealth of Nature.  
Beauty is the prime motiv of all his excellence,  
his aim and peaceful purpose.

(A persistent thought with Bridges. Cp. *Ode to Music*, V. 2, 3. 'For the spirit of man on beauty feedeth'.) But he is naturally confronted at once with the familiar stumbling-block put in the way of reason by the fact of ugliness and evil in Nature. With l. 120 cp. *Eclogue I* in *New Poems* (1899) *September*: 'Earth's flaunting flower of passion fadeth fair'.

**129-44.** This is an obscure paragraph. Lines 129-33 clearly assert the vanity of asking 'why' or 'whence'. Lines 134-5 continue ironically in the same strain. When one accepts the rebuke and distrusts reason, one is reminded in ll. 136-44 that reason is after all part of Nature, 'who by her own faculty in thee judgeth herself'. The poet is presenting the dilemma which confronts all attempts to unseat reason

on the ground of incompetence. Reason may not be able to solve the problems which perplex us, but it is only by reason that one can judge reason.

**145-73.** Reason is 'Nature's prescriptiv oracle', though 'so small and tickle a thing'. *Tickle* = unstable, delicate (cp. l. 162): an echo of Spenser's use of the word in his famous stanza on mutability at the end of *The Faerie Queene*.

**152.** *conscient Reason*. Bridges often uses the phrase. It means no more than 'Reason', but is a reminder that Reason is a function of consciousness as opposed to those of the unconscious.

**161.** *God's orrery* = the astronomical universe. An orrery is a mechanical toy representing the motion of the planets.

**162.** *Life's mighty mystery* = life, which was potentially in the 'elemental fire' which Bridges here assumes to be the original stuff of which our earth consists. This life is self-animated, or comes to life, in animal forms, which fire annihilates. This is put as something of a paradox: but in fact paradox is hardly possible in dealing with an idea so inconceivable as the origin and nature of life.

**174-222.** Intellect or Reason (here as elsewhere Bridges uses the two words as synonymous) is 'nascent also in brutes', but to so small a degree that 'because human sorrow springeth of man's thought' men often envy the unreasoning care-free brute creation. But while admitting the reality and importance of pain the poet, true to the dominant motive of his poetry throughout life, is emphatic in vindicating the claims of reason as against brute sense and of joy as a more potent element in life than sorrow.

**191.** *monarch-beam*: the 'balance' of Life. The phrase seems to be a variation on 'the king's beam', 'the public standard balance': see *O. E. D.*

**198 foll.** Cp. *Later Poems*, 1. *Recollections of Solitude*, ll. 1-8 (1900).

**201.** *Memory's hustled sieve*: Memory is pictured as shaking

a sieve and getting rid of the thinnest of its contents. This use of 'hustle' is the original one and recognized by Johnson. 204. Cp. *The College Garden in 1917*, ll. 5-7 (*New Verse*).

**223-76.** Reverting to the problem of Evil the poet is led on to the 'mystic Vision', without which such a problem would not exist, and which itself 'beareth assurance of the diviner principle implicit in Life' (is in fact the 'divine discontent').

The power of the mystic vision is illustrated in a beautiful passage on St. Francis of Assisi, whose

following in life and his fame thereafter  
confute the lower school of Ethick, which would teach  
that spiritual ideas are but dream-stuff in men.

223. Cp. *Now in wintry delights*, ll. 212 foll. (1903).

229. *Plato's ladder*. Plato does not actually employ the image of a ladder: Bridges is probably thinking of the ascent of the soul by the path of dialectic, or reasoning, from the perception of phenomena up to the apprehension of Reality—as described in the Sixth Book of the *Republic*. There is an analogous ascent from the love of one beautiful form to the love of Absolute Beauty described in the *Symposium*, with which also Bridges was familiar.

257. The Latin is that of the evening collect: 'the peace which the world cannot give us'.

262. *Damian*: the Convent of San Damiano near Assisi, founded by St. Francis. The following lines are a paraphrase of the famous *Canticle of the Sun*, more correctly *The Praises of the Creatures*, often translated, as, e.g., by Matthew Arnold in *Essays in Criticism*, the essay on *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*.

272. *Bencitè* = *Benedicite*.

**277-336.** The hymn of St. Francis sets the poet off on one of those pictures of landscape and skyscape in which he especially delights. The clouds, the stars, the trees, and gardens and streams—'the landscape lure of rural England'—all this is set down, without formal syntax, in a sort of



enthusiastic reverie: at the end of which the poet, once more become philosopher, reflects that 'this spiritual elation and response to Nature is Man's generic mark'. There is a hint of such a thing in the eyes of 'the ruminants', such as the wild antelope—a look which gave birth to the fable of the unicorn:

but the true intellectual wonder is first reveal'd  
in children and savages and 'tis there the footing  
of all our temples and of all science and art—

which is a variation of Plato's 'philosophy begins in wonder'. ll. 331-6 are a beautiful and characteristically brief *coda* to this section.

332. *his baby* in 1st ed., *the baby* in 2nd ed. The reference is to the Sistine Madonna and Child (at Dresden).

333. Rafaël's Mantuan brother is Virgil, and the allusion is to the Fourth or Messianic Eclogue.

**337-500.** The main purpose of this section is to assert the unity or homogeneity of the universe, and in particular the continuity of man's 'characteristic faculty' of 'conscient Reason' with the rest of Nature. 'Nature' in Bridges, as in ordinary as well as philosophic language, means sometimes the sum of natural objects, sometimes—and more often—the cause of natural objects, conceived almost inevitably in quasi-personal terms, and often indistinguishable from God. Thus in l. 343 we get the second sense, in l. 344 the first, viz. the external universe. Cp. too Nature's 'plan' (l. 147) and 'Universal Mind' (l. 152).

360. *impertinence* = 'presumption', 'arrogance'. Man is inclined to separate himself from the rest of nature: but Science cannot allow this, as the poet goes on to explain.

365. A comma after 'imagination' would be normal, and also after 'art', but Bridges is fond of leaving out commas especially at the end of lines.

368. *euristic*: this spelling is evidently deliberate and apparently intended to be phonetic, the aspirate of the word 'heuristic' being lost in the coalescence of the first syllable

- with the preceding 'the'. 'Heuristic' (an anomalous form introduced in the nineteenth century for the more correct 'heuristic') means 'serving to find out or discover' (*O.E.D.*).
372. *the impercipient*: sc. whatever, unlike man, has not 'percipient sense', the power of perception: cp. ll. 345-7.
373. See IV. 918-22.
382. *Whereamong*: sc. among the various types of men.
396. Cp. IV. 595 foll.
414. *Conscience* = consciousness, as throughout the poem.
422. Heraclitus is introduced here, in close proximity to the fire-worshippers (such as the Zoroastrians), because of his insistence on the continuity of the eternal flux of things and his hypothesis that the cause or principle or Logos of this continuity was Fire.
- 429-30. The allusion is to the famous 'Monads' of Leibniz (born 1646, died 1716). The phrase 'monad-atoms' is misleading: Leibniz expressly rejected the atomic theory: his monads were not quantitative nor extended in space, but qualitative, non-spatial, 'forces' rather than atoms. The subject cannot be treated here, nor is it necessary to the understanding of the poem. But Bridges shows considerable traces of the influence of Leibniz, besides mentioning him here and at III. 774.
436. *his tottery crutch*: reason.
- 437-56. These lines enforce the preceding doctrine that Reason is a specialized organ of nature, like the productive flower-bud. What we call 'marvels of instinct' are rather the general rule, even in human life: 'tis the Reason of man that is the exception and marvel'. As so often, the poet goes off on a line suggested by what he has just said, but not strictly the line of the argument. So here ll. 450-6, fine as they are, introduce a fresh line of thought with baffling suddenness.
451. *essential premises* is a variant of the logical term 'essential propositions', i.e. propositions which predicate of a subject something which is implied in its very definition.

**457-500.** The section ends with one of the poet's delightful historical pauses, occasioned by his reflection on the discords and changing fashions in philosophy. He contemplates St. Thomas Aquinas, his *Summa Theologiae* and his vision, in a passage of characteristically mingled irony and emotion.

**470.** St. Thomas Aquinas, the last of the great Schoolmen and the more-than-Aristotle of the Roman Catholic Church, was called *Doctor Angelicus*.

**476.** *the myth of a divine fiasco*: the story of the Fall of Man, implying the failure of God's purpose in creating man in His own image; and 'leading to a foregone conclusion of illachrymable (lamentable) logic', viz. the doctrine of eternal damnation. This at least is the natural interpretation of the passage in view of 'illachrymable' and the Virgilian description; though Bridges may possibly be applying this language to the whole theological scheme of the *Summa*.

**492.** *Reynaldus*: usually Raynaldus or Rainald or Reginald of Piperno, the 'dearest of companions', to whom St. Thomas dedicated his *Compendium Theologiae*.

**495-500.** A paraphrase of the Latin of the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum*. The story may be found in Vaughan's *Life and Labours of S. Thomas of Aquin*, vol. ii, pp. 916 foll.

**501-80.** The Introduction here takes another start with a charming piece of irony, in which the Second Crusade is compared with the swarming of lemmings in Norway to their destruction in the sea. The point is to show how little power Reason has to guide man 'to'ard social order' (l. 526). This part of the poem seems rather confused in structure. The poet jumps back from the Second Crusade to the Goths, and from the Goths to Don Quixote, who is introduced in that sudden allusive manner of which Bridges is so fond: the Spanish character stands, he says,

for ever alive  
in one grandesque effigy of ennobled folly,  
among fair Beauty's fairest offspring unproved (ll. 559-60),

which is merely a way of noting the remarkable fact that so grotesque a satire as *Don Quixote* should be regarded with so much reverence as one of the great artistic masterpieces of literature.

'Yet', he adds, 'for this intellectual laughter' (sc. Cervantes' laughter at the absurdities of Spanish chivalry),

deem it not

true Wisdom's panoply. The wise will live by Faith,  
faith in the order of Nature and that her order is good. (ll. 561-3)

And yet, again, laughter, as well as faith, is a gift of God, when it is consonant with man's essence, reasonable, not cruel: for

where sorrow is sacred humour is dumb,  
and in full calamity it is madness (ll. 575-6),

which leads to a very acute remark upon the fascination of *Hamlet*, whose witty cynicism would alienate our sympathy unless we felt that he was not altogether *compos mentis*.

523. Cp. IV. 837.

530. The attempts of the savage to explain, account for, his experience—attempts of 'nascent Reason'—'hoodwink Mind', i.e. darken and confuse his natural perception and instinctive reaction to experience. He invents terrors and superstitions which haunt him instead of taking things as they come.

532. a lecture: a reading—a somewhat pedantic use of the word.

549. *one good bishop*: Ulfilas, the Gothic translator of the Bible, who was educated at Constantinople (Byzance). *one noble king*: Theodoric the Great, also educated at Constantinople.

559. See above, note on ll. 501-80.

563. Cp. Aristotle, *Ethics*, I. ix. 5. 'Those things which are according to nature are constituted in such a way as to be as fair (good, beautiful) as possible.'

581-615. Reflections on the fluctuations of Reason, which

in spite of its aim at unity varies and veers with different peoples in different times and places, and fails so lamentably to guide the course of civilization that

only in sackcloth can the Muse speak of such things.

577-80. Cp. *La Gloire de Voltaire*, ll. 40 foll. (one of *Later Poems in Poetical Works*, 1912).

True banter is of melancholy mind,  
Akin to madness; thus must Shakespeare toy  
With Hamlet's reason, ere his fine art dare  
Push his relentless humour to the quick;  
And so his mortal thrusts pierce not the skin.

581. Though superficially simple, this line is not really easy. 'Desire of perfection' is 'Nature's promise' in the sense that the fact that we have this desire gives us a promise of better things than we actually experience. The line recalls ll. 223-5.

597-8. A verbal quibble, appealing moreover only to those who know that δόξα in Greek means both 'glory' and 'opinion', and that 'doxology' is therefore capable of meaning 'statement of opinion' (or 'dogma'), which is a 'vain doxology' wherewith to praise God. To those who object to such pedantry Bridges would probably reply, with Pindar, that he spoke φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσι, 'words that speak to those who have understanding'. Such an attitude will be resented as arrogant by some readers, accepted with humility by others, shared with enjoyment by others, and perhaps unnoticed by many.

616-790. The Introduction ends with a long passage of great beauty and, on the whole, clear argument, describing how Wisdom, who rather suddenly takes the place of Nature as the creative principle (cp. l. 343), Wisdom,

the essential Beauty of Holiness,  
pass'd her creativ joy into the creature's heart,  
to take back from his hand her Adoration robes  
and royal crown of his Imagination and Love. (ll. 622-5)

In other words, the poet treats of the arts and philosophy, and, while paying fine tribute to the wonders of Egypt, attributes in splendid poetry their own unique glory to the Greeks.

616. *Wisdom hath hewèd her house*: from Proverbs ix. 1.

623-5. Cp. the poet's *Come si quando* (in *New Verse* (1926)) ll. 25 foll.

. . . it was

as if Nature had deign'd to take back from man's hand  
some work of her own as art had refashion'd it.

630-1. In the 1st edition:

Nature's wild landscape to the sovranity of Mind,  
comfort his mortality with immortal grace.

Here 'his' is ungrammatical, having no substantive in the context to which it can be referred—though the meaning is obvious. Also 'sovranity' does not fit the verb 'transfeaturing' in l. 629.

In the 2nd edition the poet rectified these oversights, and liquefied the rhythm of l. 630 by writing:

Nature's wilding landscape to the impress of her Mind,  
comfort man's mortality with immortal grace.

'wilding' is merely a synonym of 'wild'.

635. *thatt twin-sister stream of slothful thought*: Bridges apparently calls the 'wisdom of the Egyptians' slothful because of its conservatism and age-long transmission of almost unmodified tradition, in contrast with the intellectual curiosity and daring of the Greeks.

645. *upon the desert* in 1st ed.; *from the desert*, 2nd ed., more correctly. The Sphinx is near the edge of the desert and faces towards the valley of the Nile.

667. *motion'd*: gave motion to, animated.

712-42. Bridges feels to the full the unsurpassed achievement of Greek art and literature; he is also only too well aware—in his poetry and outlook as a whole, one may feel, too aristocratically and unsympathetically aware—of the defects

and the ugliness of modern democratic civilization: yet here in an interesting passage he not only shows his characteristic interest in Music and Science, but seems to take a somewhat warmer interest than usual in common humanity.

729. *prison'd* and *drown'd* have puzzled readers. The meaning surely is that until the invention of 'wireless', music and speech were imprisoned or drowned within narrow limits of audibility.

740. Cp. *To Joseph Joachim* (1904), ll. 1-4 (*Poetical Works*, 1912),

Belov'd of all to whom that Muse is dear  
Who hid her spirit of rapture from the Greek,  
Whereby our art excelleth the antique,  
Perfecting formal beauty to the ear.

743-54. And even Greek poetry left room for new types, particularly the mystical, chivalrous, romantic, lyrical poetry of love, which is almost absent from ancient Greek literature. In ll. 747 foll. Bridges seems to be thinking especially of the Romantic poets, principally of Shelley, whose poetry could scarcely be better characterized. But 'the first alluring gleam of thatt vision' (sc. the vision of romantic or lyric love) that stole by virtue of novelty the world away from the philosophic concinnity of Greek art

is not altogether easy to identify. When was the *first* gleam? In the Alexandrian erotic poets? In the Troubadours? In no case do the words 'by virtue of novelty' seem true to fact. 'The philosophic concinnity of Greek art' and 'the severe ordering of its antique folds' became dissolved, along with the social and political system in which they had grown, in the Hellenistic period ushered in by Alexander. Romantic love, like Stoicism and Epicureanism, only found room to grow in the individual Greek when the pressure of the city-state was removed. And the humanitarianism of Christianity, particularly its respect for women, encouraged romantic love, in spite of the asceticism or 'Essene war' which Bridges describes in III. 489 foll.

**755-70.** The decline of the free city-states of Hellas, and after Alexander's conquests the absorption of Hellenism 'into the great stiffening alloy of Rome'.

**771-90.** The transition marked by 'so it was' is not quite obvious. The poet has in mind the familiar idea of Graeco-Roman civilization as a *praeparatio evangelica*. The ancient world was ripe for a gospel of peace and mercy, and Greek philosophy was ready with a method and vocabulary, e.g. the word Logos, the Word, as a theological name for Christ.

**780-1.** The Church or churches do not understand the true inwardness of Christ's kingdom (l. 780), but they cannot forget Christianity altogether as a historic fact, and, though they do not keep Christ's commandment of love, they go on calling him Master and Lord.

**783-end.** Whereas Jesus 'preach'd once to the herd', now it is the wise, the spiritual descendants of the inquiring Greeks, who are being called, because they are more and more seeing the truth of his doctrine, whereas the generality of man in this democratic age is being more and more dominated by animal instincts, as it is dazed by modern discoveries and notions which it cannot digest: which is expressed by the characteristic closing couplet. The image of the Sphinx is explained by ll. 642 foll. above.

**784. tarried:** the past tense is very puzzling. It seems to be meant to represent the thought of the early Christians who looked for the second Advent to come soon: cp. e.g. 2 Peter iii. 4, 2 Thess. ii.

**785. the Greeks that come to the feast:** the point of 'the Greeks' is explained above; the addition 'that come to the feast' is suggested by the passage in St. John xii. 20 'Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast' (sc. the Passover); it seems to be merely a verbal echo. The language from l. 779 to l. 788 is borrowed from some six different passages in the N.T.



It is hardly possible either to analyse this Introduction or to name one central idea informing it; but it does in an episodic way introduce us to the poet's attitude of mind and philosophic vocabulary. It shows us by its own beauty and passion for beauty, that beauty is to this poet, if not the key to ultimate Reality (if indeed we can speak of as 'ultimate' a Reality which is perhaps only being continually realized—though on the whole Bridges conceives of God as transcendent, Creator, lover of all and therefore, in a sense, personal, cp. IV. 1392)—beauty, if not the key to Reality, is at any rate the surest basis of faith in the goodness of Reality (or God) or the reality of Goodness (or God). It also emphatically refuses to draw a line between Mind and Matter, or Thinker and Objects of Thought (except of course for logical purposes); and expressly teaches the continuity of the whole texture of the Universe and of all forms of existence, 'Atomic, Organic, Sensuous, and Selfconscient'. It is decidedly and effectively an Introduction—of the poet, his poetry, and his philosophic point of view. It is also a complete poem in itself, though we should be disappointed if it ended on this somewhat exasperated note. It does not state what the rest of the poem is going to be about. That we shall find as we go along.

## Book II. SELFHOOD

**1-41.** The book opens with a recollection of the famous image of Plato's *Phaedrus*, of the soul of man as a charioteer and two horses, the charioteer being νοῦς (reason or intellect), the horses θυμός (the spirited or passionate element) and ἐπιθυμία (desire or appetite). Bridges alters the symbolism. The charioteer is still Reason, but the horses are Selfhood and Breed—the latter word being equivalent to Sex in its common modern signification, as we shall find in Book III. Unlike Plato's horses, both Selfhood and Breed are good, though

restiv both

and wilful, nor wil yield mastery, unless they feel  
the hand of expert manage and good horsemanship.

**44-83.** After some vivid description of the unswerving Selfhood of plants and young animals, the poet asks 'how differeth the new-born child from plant or fledgeling?' and goes on to suggest that the first degrees of Selfhood may be attributed to the 'dumb activities' of atom or molecule.

**82.** *like*: similar to the activities of plant or fledgeling.

**83.** *individuat*: Bridges has a marked predilection for rare and obsolete forms; but he probably prefers 'individuat' here partly because the final syllable can be pronounced more lightly than that of 'individual' before the word 'selfhood'.

**84-124.** In animals, however, Selfhood begat its own restraint, wolves finding it better to hunt in packs, and pastoral animals herding together for protection of themselves and their young. So too birds—and the poet seizes the occasion for a pretty vignette of the partridge's ruse to save her young.

**88.** *again*: as in the existence of ugliness and evil, above I. 123-44.

**93.** Sc. correction of the horse Selfhood does not wait for the charioteer Reason to administer it.

**125-82.** Maternal devotion, the spring of man's purest affection, and of all compassion, described.

- 128-9. Not very clear. Apparently Bridges thinks that completely confident Friendship is cast in the mould of that perfectly sincere attachment of the mother to her child. He appears to mean more than that the two things are similar. Friendship springs from this motherly attachment. Cp. below ll. 701-3, and IV. 1314 foll.
- 130-2. Man's mind is the richest fruit, on the topmost branch of Nature's tree, fed from the deepest root, whatever that is, protoplasm or atom or the ether of space.
- 133-4. The expression is still difficult. Apparently Bridges means that the slow development of Reason in the human child is analogous to the other slow processes of patient Nature. Nature's patience is reborn as virtue in man's Reason in the sense that in man 'patience is a virtue', as the old saw has it; i.e. he practises patience consciously.
- 142-3. Cp. I. 497-8, though the association is merely verbal.
152. *to attain* mixes the metaphor of the mirror awkwardly; and we pass abruptly from the child's mind to the mind of most people (l. 153).
156. *a domestic symbol*: sc. a significant object suitable for the home, or perhaps rather consisting of a domestic scene—in other words, pictures of the Holy Family.
161. *the sad penitent hymn*: the *Stabat Mater*.
171. *mantleth*: a favourite word of poets, of vague significance. Here, the sunbeam shining on the incense and the coloured walls mantles the hush of prayer with a vaster silence which is laden with unheard music. 'Mantles' originally means 'covers', 'cloaks': here the cloudy-coloured light 'invests' the silence of prayer with a special quality. At the same time one feels the other meaning of 'mantle', to come to a head or sparkle. The hush of prayer is intensified into the vaster silence.
177. *Selfhood* here is of course Motherhood; in the next line 'a new selfhood of spirit' means the child.

183-447. From Motherhood the poet turns to

- the teeming progeny of such egg-breeding insects  
as multiply their children a thousandfold a day.

He describes the social system of the bees, with many charming incidental touches, not, as so many writers have done, to commend it, but rather to illustrate his high disdain of any sort of communism, whether it be Plato's or that of the modern economic Socialist.

187. *vouching in this case* seems to be a loose expression for 'being cited as evidence in this case'. But what is the 'case'? Apparently the consideration of the value of Selfhood, as exemplified in Motherhood.

200. *a beehive for their sign*: presumably the poet is alluding to some particular trade-mark or symbol adopted by some society.

212. *in them*: in the bees.

220. *abridged*=abridged. This form of spelling is not recognized among the six variants of the word in *O.E.D.*

234. Bridges forgets that Plato did not deny family life to all his 'republicans', but only to the guardian class—a very different proposition, though perhaps almost equally inhuman. The whole passage (ll. 230-58) is clever and amusing, in Bridges' characteristic vein of rather boisterous mockery.

240. *the bull's horns*: sc. the horns of the dilemma.

258. *have secured a good lien on his* (Plato's) *bluff*. Apart from the question whether Plato's communism of wives and children was 'bluff', it is not true to say that 'our sophists' (or any one else) have secured a lien on it, i.e. a right to retain possession of it. What Bridges means is that modern communists (sometimes) appeal to Plato in support of their theory, and that his great name gives them some sort of apparent justification: it is (partly) his fault that they entertain their absurd notions.

260. *platonique*: not truly Platonic, but as it were a parody of Platonic. Cp. 'grandesque' above, I. 559. Both words are

coined by Bridges. With the passage as a whole cp. ll. 354-417 of *Epistle to a Socialist* (1903), the second of the *Poems in Classical Prosody*.

284. *the solved problems*: sc. the problems which are solved by the spontaneous functioning of the cells, leaving out of account all the higher achievements of man. These 'co-adaptations of function'd tissue' (l. 276) are so wonderful, that Reason itself can bring no more, add nothing more wonderful to the make-up of man. And it adds no wonder, if we suppose that the complete insect possesses some of the faculties of its constituent cells. 'In some part' (l. 286) seems to mean 'in some degree', 'to some extent'.

291. *this freedom*: this is very obscurely expressed, as indeed is the whole passage. 'This freedom' seems to mean the apparent freedom (self-determination) of bees and ants, 'perfect organisms with sense and motion endow'd'. These free organisms 'afford machinery' to enable a common purpose to be achieved. Unlike the cells of a body, the complete insects do not work entirely in the dark, automatically. They see order and disorder and seem even to take counsel about it, apparently transmitting calls to action through their antennae; whereas 'the mutual fellowship of distributed cells' is so remote from our actual perception that we attribute it to chemical agency, without any thought of freedom or self-determination. Yet (to make explicit the underlying thought which gives relevancy to all this passage) it is the same principle of Selfhood which is really exemplified in the activity of cells as in the activity of insects or of men.

304-30. A variation of the famous idea of ἀνάμνησις (consciousness being the soul's 'remembrance' of a previous state of existence). The birth of a child is compared to an awakening from sleep; but the child gradually 'remembers', not ideas, but inherited instincts. The passage is beautiful, but the comparison between inherited functions and restoration of memory after sleep is fanciful.

335-6. *A jar of Hymettan*: the Greek scholar, Simon Menardos, sent Dr. Bridges a jar of honey from Athens on the occasion of his being made Poet Laureate. Not only Plato (l. 230 above), but Pindar was supposed to have been touched on the lips with the sweet honey of bees.

342-3. *the unwholesomeness of mixy pollen*: I have not been able to obtain confirmation of this either from books or from bee-keepers.

348. *bourdon*: hum or drone of bees. *cymes*: lime-tree blossoms are of a kind called cymes in botany.

355. *summer hath o'erbrim'd their clammy cells*: cp. Keats, *Ode to Autumn*, l. 11, quoted also in *Epistle to a Socialist*, l. 400.

379. *nisi Dominus*: Psalm cxxvii (Vulgate). Except the Lord build the house.

412. *bedels* = beadles. Bridges uses the word of the bees which attend the queen-bee with a humorous reminiscence of the associations of the word as meaning a warrant-officer or constable, or (as in the spelling he adopts) an apparitor to the Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor of a University.

424. *prick'd their cores*: a variant of the expression 'touched them to the core'.

437. *fly-puppetries of human crime*: sc. imitations (as it were) of human crimes, performed by flies (as he calls the bees here).

448-530. Reflection on the 'dominant function' of Reason in our feelings, whether of pain or pleasure, leads to a vivid description of the growth of intelligence in the child up to full manhood. The passage rises to an impassioned ecstasy, but falls at the end to an equally impassioned warning of what happens if Reason the charioteer is not upheld by Faith.

467. *inventory*: the etymologically correct, but obsolete, form of 'inventory'.

470. *uncial*: 1st ed. Uncial letters are specified merely as the greatest contrast to the 'mazy hieroglyph of Nature's book'; but in 2nd ed. the poet substituted 'scholarly'.

487. I do not know the source of this quotation: it means,

'Whence should he now bethink him of death in such full flower of life?'

510. The Faith is that spoken of above, I. 562-3.

523. *to death's benumbing opium as their only cure*: from *Samson Agonistes*, l. 630.

531 foll. A break is indicated after l. 530. The first half of Book II, up to this point, might be called 'Selfhood: Mother and Child'; the second half 'Selfhood: War and Art'. The argument is by no means easy to follow, or rather to summarize. It wanders (cp. l. 694), baffled constantly by the opposition between Reason and instinctive Selfhood (here, specifically, the parental and combative instincts), an opposition not to be resolved because both sides can claim to be justified.

532. *historic*: sc. in the history of Thucydides. The use of the word 'conquer'd' is, however, misleading, as Thucydides was not conquered by Brasidas, though he did fail to arrest the successful progress of that general. The Athenians were, however, conquered by the Spartans in the Peloponnesian war which Thucydides described.

587. *nine-column'd portico of all history*: a 'portico' as being the first 'history'; 'nine-columned', because divided into nine books (named after the nine Muses).

628-39. According to the chronology of Genesis Methuselah must have survived the Flood by a few years: the poet humorously plays with this idea. Apparently there is some tradition among sailors to the effect that 'old Methuselah' may still be seen swimming in the sea.

647. *bearded Homer*: the traditional portrait-head of Homer is bearded. Bridges uses the epithet with a more or less conscious reference to the literary use of *barbatus* in Latin as equivalent to belonging to the good old manly days. This is perhaps a convenient place to remark that Bridges' language is full, more than that of most poets, of association of ideas, reminiscences of earlier literary uses. Thus just below, ll.

652-3, have a conscious echo of Wordsworth's 'old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago': 'the abyss' in l. 655 owes its existence here to 'the dark backward and abysm of time' in *The Tempest* (i. ii. 50).

**661-87.** The thought in this paragraph goes swaying to and fro between the claims of Reason and Instinct. The poet acknowledges the existence and influence of those inherited instincts and tendencies which both anthropology and psychology explore, while at the same time he expresses (l. 676 foll.) his scepticism as to the results of those inquiries.

667. A comma after 'fading' would prevent any mistake as to the meaning of 'still', which qualifies the statement which follows; but in reading only the slightest pause is needed or permissible. The punctuation and use of capitals in all this paragraph (ll. 661-87) is thoroughly typical. Bridges bestowed intense care, not unmixed with his wayward caprice, on punctuation and the use of capitals, as well as on spelling. Here, e.g., at ll. 671-2 and 678-9 he follows a colon with a capital, where modern usage would have either a full stop or a minuscule. He means to imply that there is a greater pause or a more marked separation between those two lines (in either case) than e.g. between ll. 666-7, but at the same time not so much as would be marked by a full stop. cf. *Introd.* p. xxxiii.

680. *peduncled eye*: eye looking through a telescope swivelling on a support. Bridges transfers to such a support the botanical term for the stalk of a flower.

**695.** *Who is it that putteth this question into my mouth?* Though the question is a challenge to Reason, it is only by virtue of Reason that the poet can ask it.

701-3. Cp. ll. 125-9 above.

709. *whence*: sc. asking the question 'whence?' Whence cometh Reason?

711-12. the inconscient mind; which, though it be but a naked babe, is yet nearer, &c.



**723.** *Reason* is the coefficient of the 'inconscient mind' or of the 'given unique quantum of personality' because it co-operates or collaborates (cp. l. 742 below) therewith in producing the result of a person's thought, action, character. The purely mathematical sense of 'coefficient' is inapplicable here. So also is the purely mathematical sense of 'determinant', which here means that Reason not only co-operates with, but determines, guides (cp. the image of the charioteer and ll. 742-3 below) the non-rational elements. Yet the language used, 'determinant', 'coefficient', 'varieth' (cp. 'variables' in mathematics) is evidently intended to suggest mathematics. Bridges is fond of employing technical, especially scientific terms, in a suggestive, not literal, sense, and often does so with happy effect. It may be doubted, however, whether mathematical terms can be suitably used in a vague sense. And yet this paragraph and the next (ll. 708-31) give a wonderfully compact and vivid presentation of the human soul.

**732-839.** An interesting and often difficult discussion of Art, of the parts played by Reason and animal instincts in producing Art; an attempt to find a harmony of sense and spirit and intellect and will in the artistic motive and in artistic appreciation.

**736.** *For that:* because. 'I ask (l. 732) because I find him' &c.

**737.** *hermeneutic:* interpretation.

**738 foll.** All the excellence of Art springs up spontaneously, and ripens, on specially gifted 'personality'. Without this gift of inborn faculty Reason is barren. Where the inborn faculty exists Reason itself is 'creativ' (l. 741), collaborating in artistic creation, guiding the inborn faculty in various ways (l. 743)—in some persons selecting and approving the 'spiritual nativities' or offspring (thoughts, imaginations of poet, painter, &c); in others (l. 748 foll.) laboriously unfolding the undeveloped ideas and images, which still change of themselves while Reason is moulding them.

**749.** The governance of Reason appears in another case as 'toilsome evolution of larval germs'—not a happy example of Bridges' more elaborate diction and use of terms familiar in science in an unfamiliar sense. A 'larval germ' is surely an inaccurate expression. The 'larva' or 'grub' is a later stage than the 'germ' from which it develops, though it may be regarded metaphorically as the germ of the still later complete insect. However the distinction between the two cases here described is clear enough. In some works of art the function of Reason appears to be simply to choose, endorse, and commend the creations which spring, as it were, perfect from the womb of genius. In others it appears that Reason labours hard to bring the unshaped, immature, hints and attempts and suggestions of the artistic faculty into form and coherence. To take a single kind of art, we might cite Mozart and Beethoven as examples of the two contrasted modes in which Reason and the artistic faculty may be related.

**750.** *transform*: a rare intransitive use for 'transform themselves'.

**751-73.** The mixture of scorn and sympathetic insight in this passage is characteristic. Bridges is himself partly artist and partly philosopher: hence his belief that it is a 'good intuition' which surmises that the master-key of truth may lie in Art. The whole poem is the expression of this belief or of the will to believe it. Lines 755-6 give an epigram analogous to the common saying that the critic is one who has failed to be an artist. Like most generalizations it is only partially true: and Bridges gives it the lie in the following lines about the Greeks, and particularly Plato 'the twin-gifted', sc. artist and philosopher.

**764.** *sophistic banqueters* is Bridges' contemptuous name for philosophers and students of philosophy in general, with the tacit exception of any whom he would allow to deserve the name of philosopher.

766. *Zeno's lancing logic*. The reference is apparently to Zeno the founder of Stoicism, who rejected the Platonic doctrine of Ideas along with the duality of mind and matter which that doctrine attempted to unify. But the expression 'lancing logic' is more appropriate to Zeno the Eleatic, the author of the famous 'paradoxes', who, though a predecessor of Plato, is tacitly acknowledged in the *Parmenides* as a critic of the doctrine of Ideas whose objections are not answered.

769-70. An 'indefinable form' is a contradiction in terms, 'form' being itself that which defines. The Platonic 'Ideas' are 'forms', and it is theoretically 'absurd' that they should be 'indefinable'. Yet this absurdity 'is less than the denial of existence to thought'—a denial which can only be made by thought.

773. *and in such thought their nearest name*: sc. in the thought, that ideas are 'truer existences than whatever else', we must be giving the name which comes nearest to expressing what ideas are.

774-824. The co-existence of, and unexplained, but evident, relationship between the instinctive and the rational processes, between sense-perception and reflection, the mutual interaction of objects of sense and mental states—these mysteries are further pondered, with the upshot that 'man's trouble came of' the 'divergency' between his developing the 'spiritual perception' which also developed out of 'the reason and dark workings of his animal instincts';

and thus I stand where I conclude  
that man's true wisdom were a reason'd harmony  
and correlation of these divergent faculties;

and this is what all men 'who can see the abyss' have aimed at,

from devout Pythagoras  
to th' last psychologist of Nancy or Vienna—

as the poet breaks off in his favourite brusque manner.

779. The semicolon at the end of this line in the 1st ed. is unfortunately omitted in the 2nd ed.

783. *their*: of the rays of sunlight.

787. The Greek astronomer is Ptolemy (A.D. c. 150-200), whose 'system' held the field till it was superseded by that of Copernicus. The following 'epigram' is attributed to Ptolemy in the *Palatine Anthology*, ix. 577 (to be found also in Mackail's *Selections from the Greek Anthology* and translated by Bridges in *Poems in Classical Prosody*, 14).

οἶδ' ὅτι θνατὸς ἐγὼ καὶ ἐφάμερος· ἄλλ' ὅταν ἄστρον  
μαστεύω πυκινὰς ἀμφιδρόμους ἑλικας,  
οὐκέτ' ἐπιψαύω γαίης ποσίν, ἀλλὰ παρ' αὐτῷ  
Ζανὶ θεοτρεφέος πίμπλαμαι ἀμβροσίης.

'I know that I am mortal and live but for a day; but whenever I gaze at the serried aye-returning circlings of the stars, no longer do I touch earth with my feet, but at the side of Zeus himself I take my fill of the gods' food, ambrosia.'

807. *unconscious*: preferred here to 'inconscient' no doubt as blending better in sound with 'mind'.

809. *fashion'd*: grew, developed—an intransitive use of the verb apparently peculiar to Bridges. Cp. 'transform' above l. 750.

825-39. The same living compact which exists, or should exist, between reason and the unconscious mind exists between 'spiritual emotion' and 'sensuous form' to produce Art; a compact existing more readily in regard to sound than sight, because (as the poet holds consistently with the whole theory of evolution which he has expounded in Book I) the sense of hearing is 'endow'd' (given some emotional significance) earlier in the scale of animal life than that of sight.

834. The 'So' is not very convincing here, any more than at l. 771. But the six lines are relevant to the whole of the preceding discussion—though there is not much real help to be got by renaming Plato's Ideas 'Influences'. At the same

time the poet has now arrived, partly with Plato's aid, at the very core of his poem. 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' 'Conscient Reason' must make use of, but cannot itself create, 'existences beyond its grasp' (l. 805), which influence the 'unconscious mind', which in its turn 'inspires the Will'. These 'existences' or 'influences' he regards, in a manner *analogous* to Plato's conception of the Ideas, as

eternal Essences that exist in themselves,  
supreme efficient causes of the thoughts of men.

It does not occur to him, apparently, to ask whether it is legitimate thus to hypostatize (to give an independent existence to), as 'essences that exist in themselves' and are 'efficient causes' of our thoughts, what we can only be aware of as elements in our thoughts. But he is not really concerned so much with the logical or metaphysical problem of Mind and its object as with what we may call the historical question, 'What is Beauty?' And to this he thinks he has now found an answer which he proceeds to give in the next section.

**840-7.** The very core, as said above, of the poem. Lines 842-7 could not be made clearer by paraphrase, and they form a noble statement of the claim of Beauty and Art. The 'alexandrines' may be 'loose', but the words are chosen with the utmost care.

**840.** The words are quoted from the famous speech of Marlow's *Tamburlaine*, Act V, sc. 1.

**841.** *loose alexandrines*: see Introd., p. xxxiv.

**849-50.** *her surprise of magic, &c.*: men are apt to marvel at the magic of Art rather than feel its real inspiration, sc. its power to 'advance the spirit in the life of Reason to the wisdom of God'.

**853-4.** The 'thin influences' are those of the 'fairseeming pretences', or what are called meretricious works of art, the kind of poetry, music, and painting which panders to inferior taste and passing fashions. 'The unaccomplish'd forms' is

(unless the words have a reference which escapes me) an obscure, and, for Bridges, unusually slovenly expression for works of art produced by unskilled artists, as compared with the 'fairseeming pretences' of skilful, but uninspired ones.

**858.** *not void of all good.* Bridges does not (as people so often do) roundly condemn all inferior art as worthless: he speaks of 'thin influences', 'low grace', 'poverty', 'weak simulations of virtues', but realizes that there is no hard and fast line between the degrees of merit or value in Art. The reference in what follows is to the opening words of Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography: 'All men of whatever condition, who have done anything which is of real worth (*virtuosa*) or in good truth which resembles real worth (*virtù*), ought, provided they are truthful and honest, to describe their own life with their own hand.'

**863-8.** The authority of Reason is one of the questions which troubles the poet throughout: cp. ll. 688-92 above. Here he thinks he has found an answer—that in the course of her upward development into consciousness from unconsciousness she has passed from consciousness of instinct (sc. the power of reflecting upon instinctive actions and so distinguishing them from her own self-conscious activity and attempting to guide them) to the further consciousness of 'spiritual things, the ideas of Beauty', those 'influences' or 'eternal Essences' of which he has been speaking. Nay, more, Reason recognizes the autonomy of Beauty, 'judging itself by its own beauteous judgment', and in doing so establishes her own (sc. Reason's) 'authority', her right to govern 'Selfhood' and 'Breed', as no mere arbitrary assumption of power, but as according with the highest of all the eternal Essences.

**871.** *in the conscience of spiritual beauty:* in Reason's consciousness of spiritual beauty, and judged by that standard, War is a vice; but in the virtues of heroism, &c., for which it gives occasion, it is 'like unto virtue'; and as long as men are

savage it remains virtue to them. In fact (ll. 882-901), as long as men are selfish and worldly, the simple self-sacrificing soldier will be as much nobler than the majority as a naked Greek statue is more beautiful than the frivolous and dressed-up crowd at a politician's garden-party. It would seem better to print these lines close up to the preceding paragraph, which they certainly illustrate; and set the space between them and 902 foll.

**902-27.** This paragraph is as lucidly as it is beautifully written, and it expresses a dissatisfaction with Aristotle's 'intellectualism' which has been frequently expressed. It is not the business of these notes to criticize, but to elucidate: but it is perhaps desirable here to point out that 'the absorption of Selfhood in the Being of God' which Bridges declares to be the 'consummation' of the 'mystic rapture' of which 'the emotion of saints, lovers and poets all' is 'some initiatic foretaste', is open to the same objection as Aristotle's and every other attempt to define the ultimate perfection, viz. that perfection excludes desire. 'Beauty judging itself by its own beauteous judgment' (ll. 867-8) and Aristotle's God eternally contemplating his own blessedness are equally passionless. Happiness and goodness are both relative to their contraries and must perish in a perfect blank of neutrality if their contraries are abolished.

902. *Virtue is in her shape so lovely:* cp. *Paradise Lost*, iv. 847, 8 'and saw Virtue in her shape how lovely'.

903. *even of her nativ face:* this simple-seeming phrase is not so simple as it seems. One is inclined to ask: what should the lover of virtue be enamoured of at sight but the native face of virtue? I think Bridges means to say that the beauty of any and every sort of virtue appeals at once to the lover of beauty, apart from anything that Reason may have to say.

922. *thatt love.* This is a place where the device of doubling the final consonant to distinguish the pronoun from the conjunction is helpful: 'that' would be ambiguous here.

**928-1001.** The poet is still troubled with the inconsistency of his own, and other people's, thoughts about War, which from one point of view is obviously bad and yet from others is good, or at any rate is the occasion of good. He returns to the subject with fluctuating thoughts.

938. *fust unused*: cp. *Hamlet*, iv. iv. 38-9, 'that capabilitie and god-like reason to fust in us unus'd.'

952. This line is awkwardly attached to the sentence. Bridges must mean that the keen sportsmen whom he has been describing do not heed the wrongs and cruelties that come and pass ('and pass' is important—after all, they do pass), but overlook them as if they have not suffered themselves nor seen suffering. He goes on to contrast those who have seen suffering and suffered it during the Great War, and the epilogue to the Book is a meditation on that theme.

965. *her showy Invincibles*: the 'showy' flowers are so much more truly 'Invincibles' than any 'invincible soldiers' of Napoleon or another.

**980-8.** If we allowed ourselves to forget the suffering of the War, each one letting his own share in those memories slip away, then Reason would dissipate its own delusion, viz. 'the accumulation of griefs'—sc. that the mere quantity of pains or sorrows increases the intensity of each; that e.g. a sufferer in the Great War must suffer more than one in a small war, or than one in a pestilence or other source of suffering.

**988-1001.** The thought passes to a different channel, but thereby returns to the main theme of this paragraph. It is the sense of our impotence to avert an evil of which we know the cause (contrasted with the superstitious ignorance of earlier sufferers) which fills at any rate thoughtful minds like the poet's with fear and inability to 'wish to forget' the War. The course of events since the Armistice has been such as to intensify the fears and forebodings of which the poet speaks, though there is so much active goodwill that pessimism is as unjustifiable as it is harmful.



### Book III. BREED

**1-150.** The book begins with a long and entertaining digression on 'Pleasur in Food', which really should, on the poet's own confession, come under the heading of Selfhood. But he protects himself from criticism on this score (if any one were foolish enough to demand a rigid method in his exposition of his ideas) by remarking that the picture of Selfhood and Breed as two steeds is only a construction of the Intellect, which takes what seem to be the two main lines of purpose in Nature and subsumes under each

the old animal passions ancillary thereto,  
tho' in Nature's economy the same impulse  
may work to divers ends, as demonstrably is seen  
in the appetite of hunger, which prime in selfhood  
promoteth no less all living activities . . . (ll. 17-21)

**14.** *herein*: in this philosophical poem: cp. especially I. 337 foll.; II. 11 foll.

**27.** *toil of sustenance to enable their blind energies*: an awkward phrase for the toil to obtain sustenance to give power to their blind energies; and either 'sustenance' or 'enable' seems superfluous.

**29.** When once man's Reason becomes conscious of pleasure in food, men who are foolish (as well as rational) make of it an end-in-itself.

**64 foll.** To these refined guests their food is barely noticed, 'a thing overlook'd' like other agreeable trifles and luxuries, such as fine linen or fine vestments, or ornaments in a Church. All these things are good and deserve no censure, but they are 'superfluities', not necessities. So to these guests 'the intellectual banter and familiar discourse of social entertainment' is the real *raison d'être* of their dinner-party; the food merely 'an accidental relish'. The illustrations from the *Odyssey* and from Church furniture are unexpected and somewhat far-fetched: but they are used partly with an

ironical purpose, pointing the contrast between such luxuries and luxurious food.

68. *rangled shroud*: I do not know where Bridges got this word, nor, for certain, what he meant by it. There is a dialect-verb 'rangle' used intransitively of plants which 'wind' or 'twine'. This would lead one to guess that Bridges meant 'woven'; but it would be strange to use so unusual a word in mere tautology—'the woven shroud that she wove'. The most appropriate meaning, for which however I can find no authority, would be 'unravelling', as the most notable thing about the shroud which Penelope wove for Laertes was that she unravelled it every night in order to defer the answer she had promised to give to the suitors when the shroud should be finished.

71. The apodosis or resolution of this sentence is also unexpected. Though in refined circles luxury in food is 'cleansed of its mere sensual smirch', yet—your real epicure regards that sort of 'amenity of Mammon' as equally far 'from pleasure's goal as pothouse cheese and ale'.

87-116. The poet has no sympathy with the epicure as far as eating is concerned, but he has a very vivid appreciation of wine, the various delights of which he describes with evident gusto, even though the end of indulgence in both food and drink is the same 'sad day'.

119. *Emeritus*: a title now confined to retired Professors. It means 'having earned one's discharge'.

126-40. 'This' means the complete satisfaction of the sportsman in his sport, which is an end-in-itself, just as 'pleasure in food' is an end-in-itself to the epicure. The supreme ecstasy of the mountaineer is an instance of the same complete self-sufficiency of a pleasure. But the contrast between the extremes of the glutton and the mountaineer is pointed with one of the poet's sudden descents from poetic rapture to the tone of scorn.

**135.** *lieth in dream*: I do not know where this quotation comes from.

**146.** *convey*: a very curious use, apparently meaning to give his book a good passage to the understanding of his readers. His book was to deal with the struggle of Greece and Persia, and seeking for the root-cause of their enmity to make his story intelligible, he finds it in 'Breed' as exemplified in the stories of Io &c.

**159-62.** These lines indicate the main concern of the Book, the love of men and women.

**163** foll. The poet's 'dissension from Spinoza' is introduced abruptly, in his usual manner, and allusively. No doubt he refers to Spinoza's intellectualism in general, which though beautiful itself in its austerity is defective in its neglect of the aesthetic element in human experience. But the point of Spinoza's introduction here is his share in the perfecting of the microscope and so in enabling the modern biologist to arrive at his theories.

**164.** Spinoza was not literally Bruno's pupil, but was certainly influenced by that most brilliant and unfortunate representative of the Renaissance. Bridges applies to Spinoza the words ὑψίπολις ἄπολις from the famous chorus about Man in Sophocles, *Antigone*, l. 370, in evident allusion to Spinoza's excommunication by the Jewish community of Amsterdam and his consequent exile from that city. The meaning of ὑψίπολις is doubtful. It may mean 'exalting his city' or 'eminent in his city': in both senses it is applicable to Spinoza, one of the noblest of men and of philosophers. ἄπολις = deprived of his city.

**170** foll. This a reference to the Mendelian doctrine of particulate inheritance. The 'atomic mechanism' is that of the chromosomes which are found in the nucleus of every organic cell. The 'genes' are the unit factors of which each chromosome is conceived to be built up. The 'inexhaustible interchange of transmitted genes' in fertilization produces the

- conditions for diversity of forms and characteristics in individual organisms of a species. For further explanation of the theory the reader is referred to the biological text-books.
176. *the enrichment of species*: not merely race-propagation; see above ll. 159 foll.
- 181-2. Even if our new knowledge did enable us to undertake the regulation of human mating on eugenic principles, we still might shrink from such an ordeal. *hybrid* apparently means drawn from incongruous sources, inconsistent, resting on no sure and simple principle.
- 182-3. But in point of fact the new knowledge only shows us complexity in obscurity which we cannot reduce to simplicity.
- 187-204. Though we can never arrive at the *origin* of sex, yet we can trace the evolution of its characters from the first stage at which we perceive it, viz. in plants, to the highest stage at which we know it in man.
201. *sometimes engaging Beauty*: sometimes having Beauty in some way connected with the mutual attraction, as, e.g., in peacocks. Cp. l. 258 and ll. 390-3 below, and note on IV. 174-5.
204. *to'ard*: 2nd ed. In 1st ed. *to an*.
223. *it happen'd*: viz. that sense was 'transfigur'd quite'.
230. The soul seeks for some lodging, as it were, in this material world, and naturally seeks it in the 'bounties', the fair and gracious gifts or aspects of life. Dante's soul thus encountered an aspect, a visible face and form, which revealed spiritual beauty—viz. the face and form of Beatrice.
- 233-7. The comparison is between the rose-bud and the hour of dawn.
241. *by the merit of Faith*: this simple-looking phrase is not easy to understand, but I think Bridges means that Dante was enabled by Faith to toil at his great poem. Cp. l. 228 above. Are 'those feather'd wings' the wings of Faith or of Love?

248. *the naked Goddess of man's breed*: breed here means sexual instinct, as generally in this book. The allusion is especially to the famous invocation of Venus in the first book of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.

252. The quotation is from Lucretius, Bk. I. 22-3, and means: 'neither without thee does anything come forth into the glorious regions of light, nor does anything joyous or lovely come into being'.

254. The colon between *neque* and *amabile* in 1st ed. is apparently a mere error. It is omitted in 2nd ed.

263. The quotation is from Sonnet XXX. Below l. 268 from Sonnet I.

275-80. It is very unlikely that Shakespeare meant to imply any order of merit in the words 'Holy, fair and wise is she'. Bridges means that beauty of spirit or character is the most important quality in a lover, beauty of body next, intelligence last. But, as he says in the next paragraph and has said throughout, beauty of spirit is born of physical beauty, the spiritual perception of beauty gradually growing up from sense perception.

281. *conscience*: consciousness, as throughout.

286. *transmitted power and grace*: sc. the power and grace transmitted to beauty of spirit from 'thatt physical beauty whereof 'twas born': not in any particular individual, but in the evolution of man's sense of beauty.

292. *them*: the 'gay worshippers' of l. 290.

300-15. 'love's true passion'—

a constant conscient passion, by Reason transform'd  
to'ard altruistic emotion and spiritual love,

(above ll. 203-4)—dimly surmised by the Greeks, first recognized through Christ, is 'of immortal happiness', and

overcometh evil  
as any nativ disposition is apt to do—

as e.g. the combative instinct and the sporting instinct

described in Book II (ll. 930-52), 'but more surely and with its virtue [its efficacy and worth] more self-secure than [e.g.] the merry or sad heart', though these native dispositions are apt to overcome evil and to remain unchanged 'whatsoe'er befall', Nature being so active in them and keeping them alive. The familiar line from Chaucer's *Prologue* is applied in an extended sense, not merely to the stimulation of the birds' instinct for song by the coming of April, but to the constant effect of natural disposition to maintain itself in any given person. Bridges means that while any native disposition tends to maintain itself—a merry man to be merry, a sad man sad, a brave man brave, and so on—'whatsoe'er befall', yet one who has 'loye's true passion' is still more immune to the shocks of circumstance. The 'nativ disposition' of love is the instinct of breed, which in human beings he has already declared to combine sensuous and spiritual elements. When transformed by Reason to its highest power, love is more powerful than high spirits or melancholy or courage or any other native disposition: *amor vincit omnia*. This is so, in fact; but Bridges does not even contemplate those examples of other dispositions which are strengthened by Reason, such as the courage of the martyr or patriot, the austerity of the fanatic, the cruelty of the persecutor, even the serenity of the saint, though the last of these would rightly come under the heading of love. The reason for such a comment as this is that, although Bridges describes facts with the greatest sincerity and penetration, he is all the time also arguing and—to some extent—explaining and classifying his facts: one has to follow him, and often enough he is a wayward guide.

302. The distinction between the heavenly and the earthly Aphrodite (Goddess of Love and Beauty) appears first in literature in Plato's *Symposium*, p. 180. It has played a great part both in poetry and in ethics; so much so that an unnatural antagonism between the sensuous and the spiritual has tended to produce hypocrisy and the impoverishment

of human relations. The main point of *The Testament of Beauty*, and especially of this part of the poem, is to harmonize the two: see next note but one.

303-4. The reference is to the Christian ideal of married love.

316-24. The poet avers that the supremacy of spiritual love does not cast any slur upon sensuous Beauty.

317. *for rout of her worshippers*: refers to ll. 290 foll. above, especially l. 296. 'rout' in both places means disorderly excess of sensuous passion.

321. Sensuous Beauty is 'our true compass in art'. Bridges here implies his dissent from the prevalent 'intellectualist' schools of art which in the plastic arts, in music, and in poetry seek to substitute intellectual abstractions and constructions for sensuous Beauty as their 'compass' or guiding aims. Sensuous Beauty is also our 'comfort in faith', since it is mainly (as the whole *Testament of Beauty* bears witness) by sensuous Beauty that we are enabled to hold to our 'faith in the order of Nature and that her order is good' (l. 563).

324. The poet does not go so far as to say that Beauty is better than Virtue; but asserts that actually the pleasure of Beauty is esteemed greater than the pleasure of Virtue among men—which of course is true; but he overlooks the fact that Beauty is certainly inseparable from pleasure, whereas the relations of Virtue and pleasure are a moot point in the mystery of life.

325-477. The main subject of this section is a comparison between men and women in respect of sexual attraction and passion. But from about l. 342 to l. 384 the poet goes off into a long and exquisitely worked-up digression of his favourite kind, viz. of description of country scenes and doings and of definite objects—here a steam-plough, a reaping-machine, and a threshing-machine.

333. *angelic*: alluding to the saying (St. Matthew xxii. 30),

'For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven'. No doubt the phrase 'angelic liberty' was suggested, though probably by unconscious memory, by the familiar lines of Lovelace, 'Angels alone that soar above Enjoy such liberty'. There may well have been also some reminiscence of Hamlet's 'in action how like an angel!'

386. *by wit of the insect*. This innocent-looking phrase is in its context strictly nonsensical: 'man's Reason' cannot deal thus or anyhow 'by wit of the insect'. I do not feel at all sure what meaning Bridges wished to convey, but I suppose it to be that man has developed his agriculture both by unreasoning, instinctive, industrious adaptation to circumstances like bees and ants, as described in Book II, and by reasoning processes, of which that of the engineer is taken as the type. The return to the subject of the section at l. 387 is a *tour de force*. He has been speaking of development in agriculture, and reminds us that he had been speaking of the development of the idea of 'bodily beauty' as 'a feminine attribute' (l. 336).

388. *matriarchy of sorts*: a curiously colloquial expression for 'matriarchy of a sort', 'some kind of matriarchy'. *Matriarchy* = rule of the mother of the family.

403-10. The main allegation of these lines is surely very wayward, viz. that women poets generally ape the male attitude towards love. It would be easy enough to find examples of such imitation, but to name a few of the best women poets, Emily Brontë, Mrs. Browning, Mrs. Meynell, is to disprove the general statement. Bridges' own attitude towards women poets is indicated clearly enough in l. 403 and in the parenthesis 'coud thatt hav been' in l. 400. His references to Sappho's 'complisht artistry' and 'muliebrous dump' (ll. 408-9) and 'manly mastery of art' (l. 466) show that he was far from sharing the idolatry of Sappho which has been so frequently proclaimed by men of letters.



406 foll. The 'lady' is either 'drown'd in man's tradition' and merely imitates him or deems that singing in a bass voice ('thatt' is demonstrative and refers to the previous line) is the orthodox manner of love poetry written by a woman ('the sapphic mode'), because one of the two love-songs of Sappho which survive, viz. the one translated by Catullus, is written in this male tone, 'this falsification of her true soprano'. The reference is to Sappho's poem beginning Φάινεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν ('That man seems to me equal to the gods'), which Bridges designates in somewhat mocking terms 'thatt muliebrous dump', sc. that feminine song of woe.

407. *which pedantry hath saved*: sc. which have been preserved, when Sappho's poetry in general has perished, merely by pedants quoting them in their learned works. This is scarcely fair, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus who has preserved the first of the two poems, and Longinus who has preserved the second, are no more 'pedantic' in their interest in poetry than is Bridges himself. Bridges is carelessly misapplying the notorious fact that a great many small 'fragments' of Greek literature come to us from the works of grammarians, though in point of fact Greek grammarians were on the whole too much interested in practical rhetoric to be appropriately called 'pedantic' in the current sense.

423. *initiations of yore*: e.g. the Eleusinian mysteries.

439. Cp. above ll. 268-9.

440. I do not know what particular passage of Plato, if any, Bridges had in mind; but something like these statements may be found in many places in Plato, especially in the *Symposium* and the third book of the *Republic*.

448. Sc. too many are only influenced by beauty in its sexual aspect. When 'in love' they are quickened to awareness of beauty and perhaps in some degree to its spiritual implications; but except in this particular state they are dull and impervious to beauty, whether in nature or art.

**458-61.** These lines are difficult. The meaning may be summarized thus: Nor can a man grow up to the highest possible kind of manhood without the protection which the earlier developing woman can afford. Bridges evidently intends to assert the supreme benefit to a young man if he is intimately associated with a girl—provided, of course, as he has already said, their dispositions be good (cp. II. 904-7). Her earlier-developing womanhood will 'shelter' his 'futur attainment', i.e. his immature powers with their promise of future attainment. As has often been said, she will form her young adorer—for, though Bridges does not actually say so, he is obviously thinking of this situation. (One may profitably compare the passage in Tennyson's *Guinevere*, ll. 477 foll.):

for indeed I knew  
Of no more subtle *master* under heaven  
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,  
Not only to keep down the base in man,  
But *teach high thought*, and amiable words  
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,  
And love of truth, and *all that makes a man*.

And for a charming illustration in a lighter vein cp. the education of David Balfour by Barbara Grant in Stevenson's *Catriona*.) The real difficulty is in ll. 460-1. What is the 'incumbency of his pupillage' which is 'evergrowing, as it grew in the brutes'—for 'it grew' evidently refers to 'evergrowing'? The 'incumbency of his pupillage' seems to mean the pressure of his developing manhood with the consequent deepening and, in a sense, materializing of his love. As the youth develops, his first idealizing, almost disinterested, worship of the girl becomes more and more love in the personal sexual sense, with a consequent growing 'incumbency of his pupillage' upon her. He still is her pupil, but the relationship begins to involve serious personal responsibility as he becomes more and more her lover. So far the passage seems explicable, though expressed in crabbed

and unnatural terms. But how did anything like this incumbency grow in the brutes? Bridges writes as if the reader would understand from what he had already read in the poem. The only passage that seems capable of throwing any light on this one is ll. 195-204 above, where the origins of sexual love are treated. It is evident from what follows here (ll. 461 foll.) that Bridges *is* thinking of sexual love, for he plainly says that nature forbids women to 'make love as men make it' for the reason set forth in this paragraph, viz. that 'love's call to woman is graver and more solemn than it can be to' man, involving this instinct of motherhood and protection and evocation of man's highest powers.

467. *exceeded by default, nondescript*: exceeded the normal measure of woman's intellectual power (cp. ll. 454-5) but only by default, by 'lack of the true feminine'—a default which the poet cannot or chooses not to describe further, though in the following lines he to some extent does so.

469-70. The reference is to Aristotle's *Ethics*, Bk. III, ch. x, and Bk. VII, chs. i-x, where temperance, profligacy, and incontinence are discussed.

472. Sc. in the verb *Λεσβιάζειν*, 'to behave as a Lesbian'.

478-97. From one perversion of 'Breed' the poet is led, possibly by unconscious influence of the familiar Aristotelian manner of contrasting extremes and finding virtue in the mean between them, to think of the, in some sense, opposite, viz. 'Essenism', or abomination of all sexual passion: Christian monogamy being the virtuous mean.

481. *sib*: akin.

489. The Essenes were a monastic sect of Jews of an ascetic type, which came into existence in the struggle of the Jews with Hellenism in the time of the Maccabees. Their influence may probably be seen in John the Baptist and in the ascetic strain in early Christian thought and practice, though the Essenes were not the only ascetics in the Graeco-

Roman world and it is fanciful of Bridges to talk of the two Wars of the Essenes as he does. He uses Essene as equivalent to ascetic and Puritan.

490. *handsel'd the faith*: contributed something to the first beginnings of Christian belief and practice.

505-6. Another obscure sentence. The 'clash of arms and yell of battle' vibrates to this day in 'the unsearchable storage of Earth's high firmament'. What is this? The general sense is evidently that the wars of Hun and Teuton were celebrated in 'sagas and epic rhapsodies' (l. 499) which still live; as he says just below, 'with the sword follow'd the song, an inextinguishable pæan of battle and blood'. The picture suggested by 'the unsearchable storage of earth's high firmament' is that of storm-clouds stored with thunder, lightning, and rain. But what is it that is thus metaphorically described? The poetry or poetic traditions of European literature? The racial movements and strife, which still continue and may be traced back to the invasion of the Huns? Or is Bridges merely expressing in high-flown language the physical dogma that no vibration can ever entirely cease? If so, it must be admitted that he is indulging in a whimsical irrelevance. Does 'unsearchable' mean 'inexhaustible'?

515-33. A highly wrought paragraph of choice diction, but without syntax, and its connexion with the context difficult to explain. Bridges appears to be thinking of the beautiful poetry which has arisen from fierce and barbarous struggles and sagas such as those of Huns, Goths, and Vikings. These struggles and sagas were 'a sudden eruption of nature', like a volcanic eruption.

516. *faltering*: tottering, shaking—but with some sense of the geological 'faults' produced by such an earthquake as is described.

522. The allusion to *Paradise Lost* and *Regained* is obvious, but so also is the difference in the point of view. 'lost once

thru' pride' seems to be an echo of Pope's familiar lines in the *Essay on Man*, i. 123-8:

In pride, in reas'ning pride, our error lies;  
 All quit their sphere and rush into the skies!  
 Pride still is aiming at the blest abodes,  
 Men would be angels, angels would be gods.  
 Aspiring to be gods if angels fell,  
 Aspiring to be angels men rebel.

This is not Bridges' belief, any more than the Garden of Eden (l. 520): but he gives a puzzling air of realism to his words by adding 'now by long stooping regain'd'. This is neither Miltonic nor orthodox; and the more one thinks about it, the less it seems to mean. Man 'by long stooping', the attitude of a gardener, has 'cultivated his garden', but, if the evolutionary view, which Bridges so whole-heartedly adopts, is true, he is winning it from the wilderness rather than regaining it.

523. The 'picture and outward symbol' is the actual 'gracious valley' of l. 519, not the problematical Garden of Eden of ll. 520-2. The poetic comfort and joy is symbolized by a gracious valley in a region of extinct volcanoes. It is also metaphorically described as 'the Eden that the Muse hath made', the poet's 'blossom'd Paradise', and (by implication, l. 526) Helicon, the mountain sacred to the Muses.

525. *the golden lapses of Time*: paraphrased from the first line of Keats's sonnet 'How many bards gild the lapses of time'.

531. *a strange mysterious dream*: Milton, *Il Penseroso*, l. 147.

541. *that fiery ordeal*: the wars and migrations, especially caused by the Huns, mentioned in ll. 500 foll. above. The reference to Tacitus is misleading, as suggesting that he had visited 'the rude homesteads of Germany', and that the Germans as described by him were less fierce than they became in later years.

545-50. This is merely a parenthesis suggested by the thought of the sagas. The allusion to Hagar and the Angel will

escape no reader; but 'the lost Bedouin songs, that seal'd the weird' are obscure words. 'Seal'd the weird' should mean 'confirmed the fate, or destiny'. Bridges seems to be thinking of Bedouin songs which may be supposed to have been the source of the story of Hagar as told in Genesis.

564. What they had first sparingly allowed, viz. the bards to make ballads of Bible tales, they now practised in great quantity, transcribing pagan tales in what they thought Christian forms, &c.

575. *accepted their rebate*: this is a very strange use of 'rebate'. The 'dispossess'd devils' must be the gods and heroes of pagan tales and sagas, which were allowed by the monkish poets to come back to their old home in more or less Christianized forms. The permission to return is apparently spoken of as a 'rebate' or 'deduction' from the sweeping sentence of expulsion which the Church had originally pronounced.

581. *St. Andrew strode forth in plate-mail*: sc. in medieval legend, e.g. the Anglo-Saxon poem *Andreas*.

582. *the Catechists*: sc. the monks who taught the people.

592-3. *Cæsar's great ship* is the Roman Empire which 'founder'd with all its toys decadent in the deep' of the barbarian invasions.

596. Refers to the Arabic learning derived from the Greeks which came back to Europe with the Moors.

599. *Abelard, who with his ethnic books*: Abelard was especially famous for his lectures on Aristotle's doctrines of logic and rhetoric. I do not know why the word 'ethnic' was chosen, though from the reference to the Ishmaelite it would seem to bear some allusion to the distinction of Gentile (Latin for ethnic) from Jew. It may, however, merely mean celebrated among the 'nations' who flocked to Paris for the sake of learning.

605. The quotation is from *Rondel XXIII* of the *Poésies* of Charles d'Orleans.

613. *that first impetuous raid*: sc. of the Troubadours, now to be described.

620. *polders*: lands reclaimed from the sea; a Dutch word.
632. Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse (1156-1222) held a brilliant court and combined very loose morals with patronage of the *Cathari* or 'Puritans' of that day. In 1208 after some years of negotiation Innocent III launched a crusade against him under Simon de Montfort, the father of the leader in our Barons' War.
649. *this one innocent*: the Provençal language: cp. ll. 725-30. The singular is puzzling after the plural 'babes' and 'tongues'. But the meaning must be that the extermination of Provençal speech by the Albigensian War could not prevent Latin being displaced by the vernacular languages of modern Europe.
650. *Skysoarers*: Petrarch, Dante, Chaucer, &c.
660. The poet seizes the opportunity for an excursion into a delicate revel in poetic names, and returns to his theme with great ingenuity in ll. 676 foll.
- 666-7. By 'a twin day' Bridges must mean one period of twenty-four hours which contains two calendar dates, as a twin egg contains two yolks. In more ordinary language, the westward-going traveller drops a day from his calendar, one date being by convention omitted on crossing the 180<sup>th</sup> meridian: while at the same point the eastward-bound traveller duplicates a date. It must be admitted that Bridges' expression is ambiguous, and at first sight suggests that he is making a mistake and asserting that the westward-bound traveller *adds* a twin day to his calendar, instead of meaning that he divides one day into 'twins'.
669. The year was 1927.
688. *those ancient Manichees*: sc. the Cathari.
690. *mappemonde*: a French version of *mappa mundi* used by Chaucer and others.
701. *conscience*: consciousness, as always.
706. The Manichees lost the old *fear* of nature in the *hate* of it, personifying it as a devil.
711. The Manichean creed, setting an evil spirit over against

God, exonerates God from responsibility for evil better than others which admit no such dualism.

**741-63.** The poet proceeds to expound the function of beauty in relation to 'breed' in the same sort of way as he has expounded it in relation to 'selfhood', especially in the latter part of Book II. Just as the vision of beauty led man on from the mere will-to-live to a full emotional and spiritual life, so the vision of beauty led him from mere animal mating to the most transfigured love.

**760-3.** There seems no sufficient reason for the poet's assertion that with the growth of reason man would have outgrown the instinct of sexual attraction, unless it may be argued theoretically that the growth of reason would ultimately leave no room for instinct at all. The hypothesis however is really pointless, for in fact the growth of reason, as Bridges elsewhere recognizes, involved the development of the sense of Beauty. Cp. II. 703 foll., 784 foll., especially 809 foll., 840 foll.

**764-829.** A running analysis of these paragraphs seems superfluous, but if needed may be found in the Introduction, p. xx. Difficulties are dealt with as they occur.

**774-82.** Leibniz solved the problem of the relation between matter and mind by 'imagining two independent worlds', sc. matter and mind, 'that move in pre-establish'd harmony'. This 'pre-establish'd harmony' is one of the most famous doctrines of Leibniz. Such a view is 'irrefutable' because it assumes something incapable of either proof or disproof. It cuts the knot. 'Excised the intrinse knot' is a somewhat laboured example of the poet's diction, surcharged as it is with literary associations. Two passages of Shakespeare played their part in the production of this phrase: *King Lear*, II. ii. 78 foll.

Such smiling rogues as these,

- Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain  
Which are too intrinse t' unloose:



and *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. ii. 305 foll.

Come, thou mortal wretch,  
With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate  
Of life at once untie.

789-90. The poet has already attributed a certain degree of 'conscience' (consciousness) and 'art' to the birds: I. 88 foll. especially 106-9.

793-4. Cp. II. 840-7.

806-8. If a man 'in the ecstasy of earthly passion and heav'nly vision' thinks that he can in his mortal state and through earthly passion mate with the 'eternal essence', Beauty, of which he has a heavenly vision, he finds out by failure that he cannot. From this attempt come 'all the delinquencies of his high passion', which in the plural must mean more than merely the failure to realize his heart's desire; it must also include moral delinquencies, offences against law and conscience, as is implied in the next three paragraphs.

822. Nothing is more characteristic of Bridges than his acceptance of the facts of life. Man cannot separate his animal desires and their satisfaction from his spiritual desires and theirs, and satisfy each kind of desire in turn. He must either let his animal desires have their way and fall to pieces of mere 'brutality' (sc. indulgence in animal desires), or 'attune nature's diversity to a human harmony', sc. reconcile his spiritual and animal desires under the control of the characteristic human faculty of Reason (cp. I. 340-2).

830-42. To refuse or reject Christian marriage is like refusing or rejecting the highest aims in Art, on the ground that it is folly to aim at excellence where so few can succeed in attaining to it, and where any success that is attained diminishes the happiness of the majority who would be happier if their own low standards were not shown up by contrast. To act or theorize in this sense is 'the humani-

tarianism of democracy', though they (sc. those who act or teach so) do not know it:

'and since ther is in the mass little good to look for  
but what instruction, authority and example impose,  
Ethick and Politick alike hav trouble in store.

because in Bridges' somewhat pessimistic view of democracy, little room is left for 'instruction, authority and example'. One can hardly help being reminded of Tennyson's *Northern Farmer's* dictum: 'Taäke my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad'; though of course the mass that Bridges thinks of includes many that are not poor in this world's gear.

849. Cp. Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, cxvi: 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds Admit impediments'.

860. *fudged he his symbol*: devised his symbol in a clumsy manner. The meaning of the passage as a whole is not clear. Apparently Bridges means that woman as separate from but mating with man reveals to him the spiritual sense of beauty: and this seems to be what is meant by 'find true tally of flesh', though the phrase is hardly intelligible.

865. *that ilk*, 1st ed., a solecism (frequent in colloquial English) removed in 2nd ed. by the substitution of 'their clan'.

866. Some of the earliest Christians were, no doubt, drawn from the Essenes; but here again Bridges uses the word loosely for ascetics or, as he calls them just below, Puritans.

876. cp. Rev. vii. 14.

895. *disseminate*: adjective, = disseminated. In 2nd ed. *disseminat*.

899. *harmonized life*: this looks back to ll. 825-9, as well as to ll. 890-2. 'The aristocracy of our English motherhood' means English mothers in noble or 'gentle' families; and the reference to 'the grafted stock of Saxon temperament' just below shows that he is thinking not only of the influence of feminine spirituality, but also of that of the Norman strain in the English nation. He rather arbitrarily confuses the two,

as if all gentlefolk were compounded of Norman mothers and Saxon fathers.

913. *convinced*: I know of no parallel to this use of the word, and am not at all sure what it means. The conduct of the common folk, or their character (according as 'it' in l. 911 refers to 'conduct' in l. 910 or 'character' in l. 907: and it makes no real difference), is 'a kindly thing with nativ honesty and good commonsense convinced'. Does it mean 'assured', 'convinced of its own propriety'?

917. The language here is evidently influenced by recollection of the conduct of the soldiers in the War, during which the word 'frightfulness', which is not quoted in *O.E.D.* later than 1713, came back into common and comic use, perhaps, in the first instance, as a translation of the German 'Schrecklichkeit'.

919. *this fractur*: sc. between the character of the common folk and that which has been formed under the influence of 'the aristocracy of English motherhood'.

924-51. The poet is aware that even if the old Hebrew writer did not 'fudge his symbol' in the myth of the Creation of Eve, it was not made clear in ll. 860 foll. 'what special function it was that fell sequester'd out of Adam in his lost rib'. Here he confesses that it was no special element, like a chemical element. He really leaves the symbol of the lost rib, sc. some separable property of man's nature, and compares the 'moods, influences and spiritual affections' of mankind to organic substances which are composed of chemical elements variously combined. Even this he finds unsatisfactory, 'bookish'—an attempt at systematization when the facts do not warrant it, and he controverts the Freudian derivation of all human functions from the impulse of Breed.

926. The subject of 'launch'd' is 'Adam' by a slight grammatical licence.

927. *paregoric and comforting cure*: tautology; *paregoric* = comforting. It is used in medicine as a substantive, like

cathartic and other adjectives, and Bridges no doubt uses it so here and then translates it into non-technical English.

939. The art of the chemist analysing organic substances into their chemical constituents is compared to the poet's analysis of human functions into various modifications and combinations of Selfhood and Breed, the poet's analysis being expressed metaphorically as 'figuring the twin persistent semitones of my Grand Chant'. The allusion here is to the well-known Anglican Chant, 'Humphreys in C', commonly used for the 150th Psalm.

947. Though these faculties are characteristic, one of the male sex, another of the female, and have become so by correlation, by mutual action and adjustment in the 'long elaboration of sex', yet they do not belong, one to the male, another to the female, solely 'in subservience to the impulse of Breed', sc. solely as factors in the mutual attraction of the sexes.

952-74. 'Woman took her jointure from the potency of spirit stored in flesh'. Woman's peculiar and inalienable dowry or jointure in her union with man is the tendency, already fully described, to develop especially the spiritual element in the instinct of breed, whereas man tends on the one hand to develop the sensuous element, and on the other hand to be drawn to a different type of character by the stronger development of Reason in him. The two contrasts between men and women, in the quality of their love (worked out earlier in this book) and in the mode of their thought (Reason in men, Intuition in women), are both established in popular belief and justified by experience, as having general validity, though by no means without exceptions. How far either or both the contrasts will or can be broken down by education and changing relations between the sexes, Bridges does not discuss.

960. Cp. *As You Like It*, II. i. 17. 'Sermons in stones.'

961-4. Somewhat of a railing accusation, reproved in advance by Burke's 'I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people' (*Speech on the Con-*

*ciliation of America*). *any* in l. 963 presumably means any individuals in these treasure-grubbing nations. The sneer at the astronomers reminds one of Wordsworth's attitude towards the scientist:

Physician art thou?—one, all eyes,  
Philosopher!—a fingering slave,  
One that would peep and botanize  
Upon his mother's grave? (*A Poet's Epitaph.*)

and cp. *The Excursion*, IV. 941-94: but it is more unexpected in Bridges, who is usually in sympathy with the scientific temper.

967 foll. Once more, it is generally true that women are more sensitive to 'the heavenly call' than men, and it appears that the devotion of the women in Christ's company was less cautious and less calculating than that of the men. But the actual question about reserving seats in the Kingdom of Heaven was asked by the mother of Zebedee's children, and Mary's devotion is contrasted with the conduct not of a man, but of her sister. In ll. 969-70 Bridges seems to be confusing the discussion of the disciples as to who should be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven with the request of the mother of Zebedee's children. All this is unimportant, however. The main point is that spiritual intuition and disinterested devotion, which are on the whole characteristic of women rather than men, are 'needful' 'to our happiness', and never more so than now, as the poet goes on to explain.

978-9. Cp. above ll. 700-3. The whole paragraph (ll. 975-1001) is a return to the dominant theme of the whole poem, the conflict of man's reasonable despair and equally reasonable faith—a conflict which Bridges cannot entirely resolve by reasoning any more than any one else can, but which he finds himself enabled to transcend, at least at times, in his experience of beauty, the beauty of nature and the beauty of Christ's mind.

**994-1001.** In the Gospels the sentence about the eye offending is concerned definitely with sexual desire, and its application here to the 'despairers', the 'earnest thinkers' of l. 980 foll., is somewhat of a *tour de force*—of which, as we have seen, Bridges is fond. But the sentence occurs not only in the passage (St. Matthew v. 27-32) which deals with adultery, but also in a context which is evidently not far from the poet's consciousness here, that, viz., in which Christ's hearers are warned against causing 'one of these little ones' to stumble and are exhorted to have a childlike trust in God as a loving Father (St. Matthew xviii. 1-10, St. Mark ix. 33-48). Bridges quotes from this context at IV. 652-5. It may reasonably be asked—What is the application of the sentence here? What mutilation is the modern 'despairer' encouraged to suffer as the price of entering 'into the life of Goddes Realm'? For even when closely connected with the commendation of childlike faith, the sentences in the Gospels about mutilation of eye, hand, or foot are clearly directed to temptations of the fleshly lusts, which are not in question here. I think Bridges means to say that modern man must be content to forgo the satisfaction of his thirst for a complete and irrefragable explanation of the great problem of evil, of Nature's 'inhumanity', &c. He must in a sense relinquish the most precious jewel of his manhood, his power of Reason, and humble himself to the simple faith of a little child—a faith, however, which, as he has already said, is quite as much justified to Reason, as are the doubts of Reason themselves, by the spiritual joy awakened by natural beauty. That this is his meaning is shown by ll. 997-1001. If it be not *true*, that it is better to enter into the life of God's kingdom without completely understanding the problems of the universe than to go down into the hell of despair with that complete understanding, then there is something better than truth; for it certainly is better to enter into that life than to go down into that hell. But to suppose that there is anything better than truth is the supreme vanity of vanities: it is a

'superhuman ambition', as the faculty of appreciating truth is the most distinctive human faculty, and the man who supposes he can think something better than truth is reaching beyond human faculties; and it is a 'poor pride' because it is the result of his pride in his reason which has led him to despair when reason cannot solve the problem of the universe. So 'the last infirmity of' his 'noble mind' would be not simply the desire of fame, as in Milton, but the desertion of Truth for some supposed better thing, the actual self-contradiction of thought.

**1002-57.** There is a decided break after l. 1001, after which the poet deals with the gradations 'from blind animal passion to the vision of Spirit' and with varieties of sexual love due to temperament, education, climate, religion, &c.

**1017.** *the four temperaments of blood*: Bridges here adopts the medieval notion of a man's temperament being sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic, according to the proportion in his body of the four 'humours', viz. red blood, phlegm, yellow bile (or choler), and black bile.

**1030-40.** Men 'deem of love differently' according to their own planes of spiritual life and their own mental powers; but Love to be thoroughly understood must be studied 'in all its perspectivs', like a physical object. It has 'various aspects of feeling': some 'feel' love in one way, some in another; and 'delusiv perspectivs to spiritual sight': the spiritual sight of one man or woman sees it in one perspective, that of another in another; and these perspectives are 'delusive', partly, one may suppose, because of the imperfection of our spiritual sight—we see through a glass darkly—partly because they are necessarily partial—we can no more see Love than we can see a physical object 'in the round'. The meaning of ll. 1036-7 is not clear; in fact, I do not think there is any real meaning in the statement that 'if Love had no various aspects, . . . it could have no essential property in the Wisdom of God'. What I think Bridges meant was really no more than

that if Love were merely 'animal passion' it would have no spiritual significance, no essential relation with the life of Reason and Beauty—which is obvious. He puts it in this way perhaps as a word of comfort. The various emotional and spiritual aspects of Love, delusive though they may often be, are *after all* evidence of its being something more than mere animal passion. He evidently feels, as a 'philosopher' (ll. 1041 foll.), the depressing effect of the various, but for the most part low or foolish, ideas that men have of Love; but he hopes to win agreement with the belief that the deal of Love conceived by the few most exalted spirits is just fied, true, essentially part of the Wisdom of God.

**1050.** *a desire of all*: the ideal which is to be found in only a few, and in them only imperfect, is potentially in many, and indeed is 'a desire of all'. This seems to be the meaning, but the expression, though superficially simple, is difficult, probably by reason of compression. The ideal is something consciously conceived; the desire is here the unconscious tendency, the instinct of 'breed', which has within it the potentiality of growing to a sense of beauty and so to higher and higher spiritual planes, as often indicated before and here again in ll. 1050-7.

**1058-1137.** The Book ends with a brilliant illustration of the poet's theme from Titian's famous picture, known as 'Sacred and Profane Love',<sup>1</sup> in the Borghese Palace at Rome. This is introduced by an extremely interesting warning,

<sup>1</sup> Modern critics reject the interpretation of the picture implied by this title, supposing the subject to be taken from classical mythology. It has been suggested that it represents Venus persuading Medea to love Jason, and reference has been made to the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus: but I can find no justification for the reference. The question is of no importance here, however. Nor is it of importance, though not without interest, that other interpreters, including Bridges' predecessor in the laureateship, Alfred Austin, who wrote a poem on this picture, give the names 'sacred' and 'profane' to the opposite figures to those to which Bridges gives them.



especially addressed to lovers, that plastic or pictorial Art can never, or 'only by rare magic sometimes', 'escape its earthly medium' and 'reach thatt detach'd suprasensuous vision, whereto Poetry and Music soar'. Incidentally Bridges advances a theory which perhaps it would be difficult to justify from the history of painting, viz. that 'our landscape-painters' intuitively 'made off to the fields with their satchels, and came on nature's beauteous by-paths into a purer air' *because* the realism of the great masters of the High Renaissance, such as Rafaël and Titian, inevitably tended to de-spiritualize the art; and this led to the attempt to re-spiritualize it by means of Symbolism, which, however, proved unsatisfactory, as it can never stir our sense of beauty so powerfully as the direct expression of feeling. This is illustrated by Titian's picture in which the symbolic portrait of sacred love 'in pictorial Beauty suffereth defeat' by the realistic portrait of profane love. Apart from the question about the landscape-painters this is true to our experience and in history. The primitives and early masters appeal to our spiritual sense of beauty in a way that the magnificent masterpieces of the High Renaissance do not: and conscious attempts to sanctify beauty by allegory and symbolism leave us cold.

1060. *comforting powers*: sc. control and use of natural facts for our 'material comfort', as the saying is.

1069. The contrast of 'cold' and 'fiery' is emphatic. Most people regard philosophy as cold, abstract, inhuman. Bridges, as poet and philosopher, knows what 'fiery jewels' philosophers seek and find. There seems to be no cause except either caprice or oversight for 'philosophy' not beginning with a capital P, as 'Poetry and Music' begin with capitals in the same context.

1081. *Sithence*: Bridges used the archaic form of 'since' to obtain his twelve-syllable line, the last syllable of 'presentation' coalescing with 'of' to make one syllable in accordance with his use of so-called 'elision'. The argu-

ment is: Painting resorted to Symbolism *because* 'in presentation', &c.

1089. *Uranian*: heavenly, the title of the Heavenly Aphrodite; cp. ll. 301-2 above.

1091 foll. The statement 'suffereth defeat' must be carried on through the remaining lines of the paragraph, in spite of Bridges' somewhat misleading punctuation and use of the capital in 'Yea'.

1111. *apportioning*: is somewhat strangely used to mean 'giving significance to' the main design. Profane Love vauntingly holds aloft the lamp of sensuous desire: Sacred Love keeps it covered and secret. The following lines (1119-22) are difficult. There has been nothing so far to suggest 'obscurity' or 'ugliness'. As so often, Bridges suppressed some of the stages of his thought. He is thinking of the obscenity to which animal passion tends in mankind if it is not progressively spiritualized. He has alluded to this in ll. 212, 293-9, 469-70: and has described more fully a parallel corruption of the instinct of feeding in the early part of this book. Profane Love, blind to this danger, glorifies and wastes the pleasure of sense. Sacred Love, alive to it, conceals and (it is implied) preserves, while spiritualizing, it. Art perceives the downward tendency of its own realistic mastery of sensuous beauty and shrinking from this kinship to ugliness proceeds to symbolism and allegory; while Vice (this comes in by a by-wind in Bridges' manner) attempts to mimic this draping of Beauty by tinsel and meretricious ornaments.

1123-37. A beautiful little afterthought or tail-piece to the book, which needs no comment.

1131. *in Plato's cave*: cp. Plato's Republic, Bk. VII.

## Book IV. ETHICK

Books II and III having described *Selfhood* and *Breed*, the two winged horses of the soul, Book IV is concerned with the task of Reason as charioteer:

that science, call'd Ethick, dealing with the skill  
and manage of the charioteer in Plato's myth. (ll. 88-9)

### 1-90. Introductory.

Beauty, the eternal Spouse of the Wisdom of God  
And Angel of his Presence thru' all creation,

arouses Desire in the awakening soul of the well-disposed  
(cp. 'some richly favour'd soul', l. 12), but even so 'this  
glimpse or touch of immanence' 'is too little to leaven the  
inveterate lump of life' (ll. 58-60), unless Fortune

stand by faithfully and foster the soul,  
fending from all evil and encompassing with good,  
the while these intimations come to be understood  
and harmonized by Reason in the conduct of life. (ll. 76-9)

10. *rivalry*: sc. with other pleasurable sensations and emotions.

13. This, as often in Bridges, appears not to be a strict verbal quotation, but a variation, in memory or intention, of the phrasing in Michael Angelo's VIIIth Madrigal (translated in *Shorter Poems*, IV. 9. 'My eyes for beauty pine'), ll. 1-2:

Gli occhi miei vaghi delle cose belle,  
E l'alma insieme della sua salute . . .

My eyes enamoured of beauteous things,  
and my soul at the same time of its salvation . . .

15-51. The poet is possessed by that fact of experience which is so familiar, yet always being borne in upon us with a certain sense of wistfulness—that the vague intuitions of childhood, the imperfect aspirations of 'amateurs in art', the first bewildering impact of such an experience as the hearing of a beautiful piece of music, the dream of first love, all these, which are

symbolized by the child-worship of Christian Art, are 'purer' and have 'less of earthly tinge than any other after-attainment of the understanding'. We are reminded of I. 335-6:

'Tis divinest childhood's incomparable bloom,  
the loss whereof leaveth the man's face shabby and dull,

and of Wordsworth's *Intimations* (which was not far from the poet's thought when he used the vague expression 'these intimations' in l. 78 here), and of Vaughan's *Childe-hood* and *The Retreat*, and many other expressions of the same attitude of mind.

24-5. Why are the black shadows of time and fate irrelevant? Because 'love's true passion is of immortal happiness' (III. 300); because in spite of time and fate we have an unconquerable intuition of Beauty as eternally real. But when once man has become fully conscious and rational, he cannot escape from the shadows cast upon even his noblest works by time and fate. 'We look before and after', as Shelley wrote, 'and pine for what is not'.

30. 'For even a certain stupidity does this'. I do not know where this occurs in St. Augustine's writings.

45-51. Cp. III. 300-4, I. 331-6. Bridges is often vague in the articulation of his thought. 'This thing' in l. 45 is apparently the recognition by men and women of the unspoilt sense or intuition of beauty, and 'whereat' in l. 46 means 'When through worship of Christ men had acquired this recognition'. This recognition is wistful and tender; so 'when art achieved portrayal of tenderness' Christian art lavished itself on infant Christs and cherubims and amorini.

58. This use of 'immanence' for 'immanent godhead' or 'immanent idea or essence of Beauty' will not mislead the reader, though it is scarcely justified by usage.

64. Cp. III. 1050.

71. 'because of some divine causes.' The quotation is from Aristotle's *Ethics*, x. ix. 6, where he says that, 'Some think that men become good by nature, others think it is by habit,

others by teaching. Now the gift of nature evidently does not depend upon us, but for some divine causes or other belongs to those who are truly fortunate'. The same thought occurs elsewhere in Aristotle and in Plato, and is indeed a commonplace.

83-6. The language is not very happy here: 'education of spirit' is an awkward subject to be personified so much; and the distinction between Reason and education of spirit is misleading. Bridges means that just as the various physical sciences arose through the activity of man's developing Reason under the discipline of nature, so the science of Ethics (as we now usually call it) arose from man's developing Reason collaborating with and guiding his spiritual intuitions, as described especially in the latter part of Books III, and in II. 738-51.

### 91-361. Of Duty.

91-130. Duty: the idea of 'Ought': its origin in the Law of Nature or Necessity. The symbol of the Ring of Being.

104. *over-summ'd* apparently means taken up into some higher generalization. The 'imperativ obligation' is Kant's 'categorical imperative', which is absolute and self-sufficient.

105. *Essence*: cp. II. 838. There are certain 'Essences' or realities, of which Beauty is one, Necessity or Law of Nature another. This same Law of Nature is 'the determin'd habit of electrons', which move without choice; it is 'the determining instinct of unreasoning life', sc. of living things which act to some extent freely though without conscious reason; it is 'Necessity become conscient in man', the 'imperativ obligation' or sense of Duty. This is in accord with Bridges' theory of emergent evolution, as expounded in Book I, and again under the symbol of the chain-ring in the following lines. He himself uses the phrase 'emergent evolution' in IV. 1260.

131. *This absolution of Reason*: this discharge of the spirit of man, of his conscient Reason, the 'creativ faculty' of l. 126, from the bondage of physical Law into the vision of God.

157. *Duty*: the sense of duty.

159-61. *Conscience* = Consciousness, as always. The process has been described in II. 107 foll. and III. 195 foll. *when and whereas* sounds somewhat affected: 'whereas' = 'where'.

174-5. *motiuis engaged on animal welfare*: Bridges uses the verb 'engage' eight times in the poem, and nearly always with a somewhat unusual nuance of meaning. Here 'motiuis engaged on animal welfare' means 'motives set on, or tending to produce, animal welfare', such as the motive of desire for physical health or 'material comfort' (cp. l. 180).

179. *therewithal no less useful*: the syntax is obscure and the loose use of 'therewithal' adds to the obscurity. The antithesis, 'soul's comfort' and 'material comfort', shows that it is the 'soul's comfort and joy' which is 'no less useful' &c.; 'therewithal' then means 'subserved' or 'procured by means of virtue'. The general sense of the passage is clear, and the argument the familiar and, I believe, irrefragable one—viz. that the most disinterested obedience to the categorical imperative or duty cannot escape the self-interest of every chosen act, the satisfaction of some prompting which the self feels. The truth is expressed more briefly in the paradox of Christ: 'he that loses his life shall save it'.

183. *Denial of Use*: sc. denial of utility as the criterion of duty.

191-2. *Comforted by least attainment, persevere*: if the Saint has even the least success in his hunting after holiness, it only spurs him on to further insatiable hunting. This is 'seeking the Lord whom they hav found'. Unless they had found the Lord, in some sense, they could not have sought him, they would not have known what to seek. Bridges, as usual, indicates a quotation, frequently not literal but adapted, by italics. The allusion here is to a well-known *Pensée* of Pascal: 'Console-toi, tu ne me chercherois pas, si tu ne m'avois trouvé.' *Pensées*, no. 553, 'Le Mystère de Jésus'.  
207. This is the one line of the poem which I cannot read as verse,

208-47. This is an important and not an easy pronouncement.

Bridges holds that unless a man's 'Ethick' or principles of conduct are of the ideal kind and rest upon faith in 'theoretic wisdom', in the ultimate reality of spiritual truths, they are 'a thing of hap', a mere haphazard code, 'without place in Reality'. If, on the other hand, a man claims for his ethics that they are the expression, under the varying circumstances of life, of principles of ideal eternal validity, then they are part of that process by which a good disposition may be by beauty educated and aspire to theoretic wisdom. The poet goes on to say that the ethics of the majority are of value indeed, but tend to a mere slavery of custom, resting upon mere animal or material sanctions; and that it is only by Teachers, Seers, and Saviours, that the higher spiritual ethics can be discerned and propagated.

208. Cp. II. 905.

210. Cp. III. 440.

213. *faith*: the same 'faith' that we have had in I. 562, II. 510, and in other places. Cp. note on IV. 1084 foll.

221-4. There is some obscurity in the words 'then thatt tendency is the animal sanction of virtue and wil take honor as such'; in fact 'the animal sanction of virtue' seems to involve a contradiction in terms. What Bridges apparently means somewhat grudgingly to admit is that changes of custom do, at any rate sometimes, tend towards a higher morality, and that customary ethics may be given approval in so far as they do show this tendency. But he goes on to point out with truth and cogency that 'social codes outlast their turn and time'.

225. *Duty instill'd with order* seems to mean the sense of duty inculcated by the rules and traditions and conventions of custom and society.

228. *their nobler vaunt* is an obscure expression, whether the 'vaunt' be that of the 'social codes' or of 'the common folk'. The social codes, lagging in arrear of life, sc. behind the progress of civilization, hold the common folk back from

that same progress or from that 'moral tendency upward' which social codes and changes of custom can boast in spite of their other tendency to become like outworn garments or 'fetters and chains'.

231. Psalm cvii. 10.

235-6. *Aeneid*, vi. 662 foll. With this passage in his head it is not surprising to find the poet using the phrase 'ampler air' (ibid. 640) just below, l. 240.

240-7. As we breathe-in the ampler air of the 'Teachers', our mental vision is sharpened and we see the two kinds of 'Ethick', the one social, conventional, prudential, material, or animal, the other personal and spiritual, ideal, rational in the best sense.

248-51. The metaphor employed is rather pedantic, but it is intended half humorously—the manner Bridges commonly assumes in assailing the modern 'democratic' and 'humanitarian' stand-point. It is not easy to see why he pairs a participle (*amatum*, 'loved') with an indicative mood (*amabo*, 'I shall love'). The general meaning is that according to 'sticklers for equality' morality progresses by its own natural growth, with no need of any grafting of specially selected stocks, from personal experience and achievement to social code, and from social code to further personal progress, and on to change of code, and so on towards perfection. Such a doctrine 'cajoleteth the diffidence of the ruler', limiting his responsibility, and 'the conceit of the crowd'. And hence arise the reflections of the next paragraph, which are as true as they are admirably expressed.

270-2. *Thus 'tis*: the connexion is: Social Ethick, whether secular or ecclesiastical, having compromised with man's animal passions, Socialists or Equalitarians not unnaturally imagine themselves to be Teachers, Saviours of Society (as described in ll. 232 foll.), and their doctrine of class-hatred to be 'the enlighten'd gospel of love'. Needless to say, the poet writes of 'Socialists' with strong prejudice against them. Cp.



the passage on the bees in Book II, and the *Epistle to a Socialist*. Here he implies that 'levelers' imagine themselves to be Teachers (in the sense of ll. 232 foll. above) because they dignify their creed with the name of Socialism, which means a theory of government in the interest of Society as a whole. Of course preaching class-hatred is no necessary part of a Socialist's creed.

**273-337.** If Socialists study history, they will come upon some facts which will startle them out of their complacent views of 'virtue's pure nativ stock which hath no need of graft' and of the equality of all men. This shock is compared to that experienced by the archaeologist (ll. 317 foll.) exploring Ur of the Chaldees when he came upon the bones of the king's bodyguard and concubines about his corpse. The poet here takes occasion for a spirited digression in which he describes with intense interest the recent finds of Dr. Woolley and his colleagues in Mesopotamia. This is one of the most brilliant episodes in the book, but it must be admitted that it has little to do with the argument of its context. It is not clear what particular facts of history are supposed to give the Socialist a shock. The general conclusion to be drawn from the disclosures of archaeology in Mesopotamia, and from the other facts mentioned in ll. 338-61 is apparently expressed in the concluding line,

In every age and nation a like confusion is found.

In other words, the poet implies that

the true history  
of social virtue and of its progress hitherto (ll. 274-5)

demonstrates that 'social virtue' (the lower 'Ethick') is a poor thing and its 'progress' practically *nil*.

**277. Mesopotamy:** this form, not recognized in *O.E.D.*, occurs first, as far as I know, in Browning's *The Ring and the Book* XI. 570. It is probably more widely known from Calverley's parody *The Cock and the Bull*.

338-61. Further examples of the 'confusion' (l. 361) of 'social Ethick'.

362-594. Of Pleasure.

372-83. 'Life-joy', for which we still habitually use the French expression *joie de vivre*, 'is coefficient with the untrammel'd energy of nativ faculty', sc. accompanies and varies with and (as the next words state) is 'the autometric scale of all functions and motions' of our native faculties. 'Untrammel'd' is, strictly speaking, illogical: but Bridges indicates that when the energy of native faculty is untrammelled then Life-joy is at its highest.

378. This line asserts as decidedly as Wordsworth's its author's belief 'that every flower enjoys the air it breathes'.

379. *vaunt of vigour*. Here this favourite word 'vaunt' seems to mean the showing-off of vigour by such motions as prancing of horses, skipping of goats. One is reminded of 'the rampant insolence of the asses' in Pindar which 'Apollo laughs to see' (*Pyth.* X. 36), and the picture of the war-horse in Job xxxix.

398. *its social pretension*: sc. its pretension to be the criterion of social ethics, the lower ethics of ll. 221, 242-4.

408. In what sense is Pleasure 'the champion of our integrity'? The answer is to be found in ll. 372-83, especially the end of that passage, where the Life-joy is said to be (though it would seem more true to say that is the accompaniment of)

thatt right congruity of his parts, for lack whereof  
his sanity is disabled maim'd and compromised.

412-18. Cp. III. 26 foll. on pleasure in food and its development or corruption into gluttony.

430-1. *an in-itself absolute good* and *and which* seem perverse defiances of customary English idiom. It is very difficult to see why the poet would not write 'an absolute good in itself', and his 'loose alexandrines' would not have suffered from the intrusion of 'one' before 'which'.

434. *the young poet*: Gerard Manley Hopkins, the Jesuit poet, whose poems Bridges edited in 1918.

448. This figurative use of 'detent' is, as far as I know, without parallel, and the addition of the words 'of force' coins a new expression. The detent of force is that which restrains the force, or the restrained quantity or 'head' of force; the force which 'can distract them wholly from their high pursuit' of 'the sublimation of life' is their 'delicacy of sense'. In other words, the ascetic saint is (sometimes, though Bridges does not guard the statement with this qualification) the man who is peculiarly sensitive to pleasurable sensations and takes refuge in asceticism, dying that he may live.

459-62. The poet goes on to argue that, though the asceticism of the saints may be justified, yet to repudiate pleasure, as not good in itself, is a mistake due to our imperfection and to our reasoning as if that imperfection were not imperfect. The intrinsic joy of active life is the very foundation of all man's activity. The return to this statement (cp. ll. 372 foll., 408-9) sends the poet off in an ecstasy on his favourite subject of flowers.

459. *The repudiation*: 1st ed. Improved by the omission of 'the' in 2nd ed.

470. *asserteth her idea*: sc. is an individual unique embodiment of Beauty, and, as it were, asserts her Selfhood even in the face of 'the omnipotent blaze of the tormented sun-ball'. The sun is called a tormented ball because of the incessant whirling of the gases of which it is composed. Bridges uses 'tormented' under the influence of its derivation from the Latin *tormentum*, an engine for hurling missiles, *torqueo*, twist, hurl.

475. *angelic*: cp. I. 313 for a similar use. I think Bridges was fond of the word. The use in III. 333 is more specific.

476. *win conscience in man* must mean more than merely 'are recognized by men'. These beauties are, as is said in I. 31 foll., 'each type a faultless essence of God's will', but in

themselves, 'each telling of its own incontinent happiness'. Pleasure is inherent in them as types of beauty (cp. l. 378 above), but is unconscious; only in man does it become fully conscious, but it is, in a sense, the same pleasure; the evolution is continuous, though new qualities emerge.

**488-91.** This means no more than that the scents which the poet smells in the dark, which he has identified as belonging to the flowers named, enter singly into his sense of smell, which has no power, like that of the eye, of taking in a large number of distinct objects at the same time.

490. *neighboring* is added apparently to indicate the short range of the sense of smell compared with that of the eye.

**501-6.** The poet pleads that we should not allow the 'reason'd folly of imperfection' to persuade us to discard such influences, the source of such happiness; and he is conscious of the risk that being 'so fine' (sc. delicate), 'of tender specialty', they may be neglected.

509. *retrieve*: sc. when they have for some reason or other departed from their proper diet. It is not clear to me why this limitation is introduced.

**512-21.** The ascetics look forward to an eternity of 'happiness', and believe that their asceticism will lead to it. Thus they assert 'happiness' as the supreme good, and 'deduce the very existence and the nature of God' from this idea of happiness, believing in the existence of a benevolent God from the pragmatic motive of their desire for happiness; and thereby indicating that 'the pleasure of life' is a very part of the order of the universe, of Nature, or (as in other passages) the Wisdom of God.

**515-16.** 'It is not strange' that ascetic saints or mystics should 'extend their pragmatism', because 'scientific minds' do what is analogous, viz. 'digest assimilable hypotheses', i.e. proceed from one hypothesis (to some extent verified, no doubt) to another which seems congruous, and find it accordingly digestible.

**522-66.** Further reflections on the attempts of philosophers to disconnect pleasure and happiness. In l. 524 'his Mother' is Nature, or a personification of the 'animal mind' out of which Reason developed. Cp. II. 725-31, and ll. 645-6 below.

**551-4.** These philosophers—Aristotle and the rest—had used the abstract terms 'happiness' and 'pleasure' to define distinctions between different kinds of that state which is the common basis or premise of these different kinds. In using these terms separately they tended to obscure the identity of their origin in the developing life-joy or satisfying accompaniment of healthy, sane function of body, mind, and spirit—as he goes on to indicate, ll. 558 foll.

**569.** *among them that know*: the phrase intentionally recalls the traditional title of Aristotle as 'the Master of those that know'—roughly speaking, moral philosophers. This passage about the 'uncharted jungle' of casuistry, i.e. of conduct which cannot be easily brought under the simple rules of 'the great virtues', is a good example of Bridges' close adherence to the facts and avoidance of slavery to a cut and dried abstract system; and it leads on to a vivid and clever, if not at first sight very obvious, brief vignette of Comedy (ll. 582-94), which reminds one of George Meredith's essay on the subject.

**593.** *thru' love of children*: Bridges is here thinking of books like *Struwwelpeter*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Water-Babies*. One is tempted to regret that he did not indulge in some description of examples; but he breaks off with a reminiscence of Chaucer.

**595-721.** Disposition and Education.

**598-687.** A general reflection on the nature of mankind (ll. 598-603). The poet surmises that good may in the end prove too powerful for evil. But he passes on (ll. 604-51) to consider 'the imitativ faculty' with which Nature has inclined man's disposition to virtue. He assumes, what he has so often

asserted from I. 122 onwards ('Beauty is the prime motiv of all his excellence'), and especially at III. 1055-7, 'the i**u**born love of Beauty', which attracts the imitative faculty in the right direction. Thus 'a child well-bred in good environment, will acquire 'the habit of virtue'. But 'the food of Beauty, must be supplied, or 'the hunger of mimicry' will seize upon Evil instead; and thus the 'intrinsic need in education is found', viz. an adequate supply of beauty. To refuse this is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit (ll. 652-9). In the early years of childhood, 'while the intellectual faculty is yet unborn', the child, if properly nurtured on beauty, absorbs spiritual beauty in the same sort of way as it absorbs music (which is indeed, as Bridges elsewhere, though not here, emphatically asserts, one of the principal channels of the influence of beauty).

608 foll. From Aristotle, *Poetics*, Bk. I, ch. iv.

616. *the Morals*: sc. The *Ethics* of Aristotle. I think in l. 617 Bridges meant to say that 'all the consequences thereof are not seen', not, as he has said, that none of them is seen.

626. Bridges is not quoting Aristotle textually, but what he says may be found in effect in *Ethics*, Bk. II.

646. This line lends support to the view that the 'Mother' of l. 524 was Nature.

653. *to be the wonted realm of heav'n within his heart*: to be the habitual possession of the Kingdom of Heaven in his heart, to be habitually ruled by God's will (I. 32) or the heavenly vision (here l. 662, and elsewhere) or the Holy Spirit (here l. 658) or the 'eternal Essences' (II. 838) of which Beauty is 'the highest' (II. 842), for all these terms are interchangeable adumbrations of that Reality which is beyond definition.

662-4. Cp. ll. 112-30 above.

665. *in her exile*: because Science, as such, is wholly concentrated on the rational investigation of physical or material phenomena and the abstractions to be drawn from them by

Reason. She is thus, in a sense, 'alienated from the life of God', and conscious of this, like an exile conscious of her lost home. And she 'dreams' of getting back to ultimate reality or 'the unsearchable immensities of Goddes realm' by ever more penetrating analysis of matter and motion.

671. *sightly works*: works which she looks upon with pleasure and pride. The choice of the word is affected by the idea of the heavenly vision, from which Science is an exile, and contains the suggestion of the earthly and perishable sense of sight. The vision that sees the sightly works of science and is bent upon 'seeing' the ultimate nature of things, 'thru' her infinitesimals' as still 'visible', theoretically, to physical sight, can never arrive at 'the unsearchable immensities of Goddes realm'.

676-7. Cp. I. 88-109.

681. *their twain affinity*: the affinity of them two—as is obvious; but the phrase is a solecism, due to the vague associations of the word 'twain'. Nobody would think of saying 'their three affinity'.

688-721. The poet will not enter upon a description of intellectual training, but in passing repeats the trite, but true, complaint of the 'obstruction' which the awakening mind meets as 'it thrusteth out its finely adapted tentacles in their first palping (feeling, tentative) movements to the encounter of life'. The particular obstruction, however, which Bridges has in mind is one which had long attracted his indignant attacks, viz. that of the irrational spelling and slipshod pronunciation of the English language. This is what he is referring to in ll. 702-7.

722-60. This section is neither very obviously connected with what goes before nor altogether clear in itself. It seems however to have been suggested by the thought (ll. 719-21) of those souls who have attained to purity only after a struggle which has left its mark upon their outward manifestations. The poet is puzzled by the familiar difficulty of

deciding which are the more virtuous, those 'who with least effort excell' or those who overcome the greatest temptations or weaknesses. But in ll. 744 foll. he dismisses the question as of little practical importance, for, as he quaintly says,

from Zion's hill-top to the Dead-Sea shore,  
between the Teacher sitting on the Mount and them,  
the nethermost unfortunats, that cannot learn—

(by whom he means irreclaimable reprobates, degenerates, and so forth, whom he compares to the dwellers in Sodom and Gomorrah)

in all the mid-mass crowding on the flowery slopes,  
hearers o' the Word, ther is little difference to be told:  
The same incarnat traitor routeth in all hearts,

viz. carnal pleasure, which (ll. 750-2) often puts 'the elect' in the greater straits because in them carnal pleasure is apt to be emptied of shame owing to the refinement with which their 'æsthetic delicacy of mind' disguises it. One is reminded of Burke's famous passage on the age of chivalry, in which 'Vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness'.

755. *ease*: the grace of mastery, won by discipline. *indolence rather is theirs*: he passes from the virtuous man who has attained to ease or grace by struggle to those men who refuse training and so are unready when the trial of their virtue comes.

761-80. The poet here launches out into one of the most elaborate and difficult parts of the poem (ll. 761-1137), a theory of Mind. He is aware of the difficulty and prepares the reader by a personal declaration, somewhat after the manner of Lucretius and Milton. But though the general purport of these first lines (761-9) is clear enough, the actual construction in ll. 766-7 is ambiguous, as any one who tries to follow out the meaning of the whole passage in detail will find. The main points are, however, that no poet has attempted this psychological analysis before, and that he



starts from the Socratic injunction 'Know thyself'—that it is in fact his object to understand and expound what the Mind of Man is.

**768-80.** The 'Know Thyself' of Socrates was a great clearing or felling of trees in philosophy because it called in question the very faculty by which men had hitherto been attempting to solve their problems, and so set them on a definite and indispensable inquiry into the theory of knowledge and human psychology.

**781-1137.** The faculties of the human mind and their functions: the relation of Reason to the other faculties. To any one who has carefully read the poem up to this point this section is not obscure; it is indeed very closely argued, and the choice of words exact, as is usual with Bridges.

**801.** *organities*: this plural is coined by Bridges to express the systems of co-ordinated living entities of which he has been speaking. He probably avoided the word 'organisms' because that is in practice confined to concrete material systems or structures of animals or plants.

**803.** *proudly stand off from conscience*: as when some dexterity acquired by practice (cp. ll. 785-8) becomes almost automatic. The adverb 'proudly' however implies some degree of consciousness and is not to be taken too literally. The poet is thinking rather of the proud *appearance* of some skilful actions which have become unconscious, as e.g. the motions of a skater or dancer. These actions will normally be parts of some complex action of which other parts and the whole purpose are conscious. For the expression 'proudly stand off' cp. II. 732-3 where on the contrary Reason is spoken of as 'standing off' in its 'pride'.

**806-24.** *the digestiv kind*: sc. of 'perfected unify'd organities'. And this 'organity' 'can decipher a message in the secret code of language' (l. 810), i.e. the mere mention of some food or drink is enough to stimulate the digestive organs. The

'privy-councilors in the brain' (l. 812) are apparently conscious thoughts and purposes which deal with concepts which cannot exist without words. It is impossible, Bridges says, to form a thought in the consciousness without its 'leaking out' to the 'corporat mind', 'thatt swarming intelligence where life began', a 'fluid sea' or 'ocean-stream' of personal life, 'where ideas wander at liberty to find their procreativ fellowship'; i.e. some ideas combine with others and with desires or sensations, and produce acts or further ideas, &c., while others perhaps find no 'procreativ fellowship'. This 'corporat mind' with its 'corporat alchemy' or action of blending ideas is neither wholly material (body) nor wholly mind. In Bridges' view there is no definite division between Matter and Mind—as he says in the following lines (ll. 825-33). Cp. also I. 162-4, 358-72, 411-30; II. 80-3, 261-303, 771-87; and especially ll. 882-92 below.

808. For 'unconscious' cp. II. 807.

836. This claim of Reason was stated at II. 698, and the doctrine of the Ideas of Essences II. 804-39. The phrase 'vain above measure' is quoted from I. 523.

851. *all things must of their ordinance*: i.e. because they are part of Nature's orderly system; and Reason judges whether any of them be out of order or not.

868. A characteristic abrupt and sardonic conclusion. Reason *is* a good physician; Bridges does not mean to deny that; but Reason is, as he has abundantly asserted, liable to error.

869-77. This is the only place in the poem where a passage is enclosed in brackets, and there seems no more real reason for emphasizing its parenthetic character than might be found for treating many other passages in the same way. But the poet evidently does wish to emphasize its parenthetic character and to carry the reader's mind continuously on to l. 878. •

869. *The assumed docility*: sc. of the human mind, its readiness

to submit to the ordering and discipline of Reason. This docility or 'Good Will' is, says Bridges, only 'the old animal instinct of selfhood', whether it be desire of betterment or desire of knowledge, which equally leads to the same goal 'where Truth and Virtue and Beauty are all as one'.

**881-1137.** This is a continuation of the exposition of the nature of man's mind, and the width of the space between this paragraph and the preceding one seems somewhat inconsistent with the general practice of spacing throughout the poem.

889. It is 'our terrestrial life' which is 'evolving towards conscience'. Bridges has frequently spoken of life in this way.

899. There was an old scholastic aphorism *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*, 'Nothing exists in the intellect which was not first in sensation', to which Leibniz added, 'except intellect itself'. This exception Bridges regards as 'futile', because intellect is 'form'd and compact of the essential Ideas' and 'all ideas come to him (man) thru' the senses'. But the expression in l. 900 is curiously obscure. 'Here' apparently means in Leibniz' 'proviso': from what does *intellectus* 'exclude itself'?

920. *as was said*: at l. 373-5.

933. *an ancient heresy*: the 'Monophysite' heresy, which asserted the 'single' nature of Christ.

**938-42.** The 'cause' throughout is the constitution of man's mind, composed as it is of 'the essential Ideas' (ll. 893 foll.) in varying numbers and degrees. 'The animal ideas', e.g. appetites, are 'common property', whereas spiritual ideas are rarer. Bridges nowhere comes to grips with the question 'how many essential Ideas are there?' He gives a list of ideas above ll. 840-2, from which it would appear that any quality and activity and perhaps any concept can be an Idea or Essence.

**958-93.** The 'old dilemma of Art' consists in the fact that Art vainly attempts to imitate Nature's 'infinite resource of delicacy and strength', yet Art transcends Nature in beauty owing to its own 'faculty of creation' (l. 974) which is not bounded by Space or Time. But this very faculty of creation, says the poet, 'is but Nature herself, who danceth in her garden at the blossoming-time 'mong the flowers of her setting': in other words, 'the Ideas which thru' the senses hav found harborage, being come to mortal conscience' (i.e. having become conscious in the human mind) work out their own co-ordinations, &c. (ll. 981 foll.).

982. *mortal conscience*: sc. the consciousness belonging to this mortal life. Cp. 'Mortal Prudence', the first words of the poem. In both places the word 'human' would seem the more obvious to express the contrast, here with 'the Ideas', there with 'divine Providence'; but the poet no doubt wishes to define more closely. Humanity may under certain conditions transcend mortality; but the 'Prudence' and the 'Conscience' of which he speaks are limited to man's mortal span. It may be, however, that Bridges merely preferred the sound of 'mortal' to that of 'human' where either might equally well be used for the sense.

**994-1006.** 'Mimicry is Beauty's cradle', as we have seen above ll. 604-22: but the 'self-creativity' of Art cannot be simulated, because Art in this sense is Nature, as explained in the paragraph ll. 958-86. But though all self-creative Art or expression of Ideas (cp. ll. 983-4) must be natural, genuine, there are many grades of it, as of the Spirit of Man in general, and many disorders to which it is liable (l. 998).

1002. *wil feel about*: cp. the picture of the 'awakening mind' thrusting out 'its finely adapted tentacles in their first palping movements' in ll. 696 foll. above.

1004. This joy is the 'Life-joy' of l. 372 above and ll. 533 foll. *Cogito ergo sum*, 'I think, therefore I am', is the famous aphorism of Descartes.

1005. *A jingle of words*: the words which rise to the lips of any one under the influence of Beauty, which tend to have the emotional character of music. They may be words newly joined together by a poet, or they may be some phrase of poetry remembered, such as 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills' or 'Awake, my soul, to be loved, awake, awake!' The Life-joy, the consciousness of existence, expresses itself in musical utterance, and this itself tends to 'fasten a man's faith on God'. The poet is stating a familiar fact of experience.

1020-1. *sentimental assurances of favorable conditions, exercise and air*: these words are very obscure. Evidently 'sentimental' is contrasted with the 'intelligent knowledge' of l. 1018; it seems to mean 'based on feeling', or possibly 'on conjecture, vague opinion'. But why 'assurances of favorable conditions, exercise and air' should be called sentimental any more than rational, it is very hard to see, inasmuch as the effects of exercise and air upon health are matters of observation and inference. Moreover the notion of 'enticing' the cells of the digestive system to a better behaviour is not merely fanciful (to which there should be no objection) but incongruous with the argument. The cells cannot be 'enticed' to change their bad behaviour to 'better behaviour'; but in the absence of 'intelligent knowledge of their intimate bickerings' it *may be* a lucky shot of the physician (though it will certainly be based upon reasoning) which prescribes the successful cure. I cannot help feeling that at the back of the poet's mind was some association with the popular notion of faith-healing or 'suggestion' as somehow defeating physical causation and 'enticing' a disordered body to 'better behaviour' by means of a pious fraud or a 'sentimental assurance', not of exercise and air, but of the formula 'day by day' or such like.

1023. *their chyme*: the pulp of food with which 'the embryo'd co-ordinating cells' of the stomach are failing to deal

satisfactorily. When they have dealt with it, the residuum becomes the 'chyle' of the intestine.

1048. *essential idea*: it is important here, and elsewhere, to remember the significance which the poet has attached to particular words and phrases: cf. *Introd.* p. xxxvii. For 'essential idea' cp. especially l. 894 above and II. 834 foll.

1051. *wilful authority*: 'wilful' is here used with direct reference to the description of 'Will' in the context.

1062-4. In other words, the poet recognizes that Reason is both indispensable and imperfect.

1065-79. Reason, though still imperfect, will continue to rise in the scale of being till at last it really does become 'thatt arch-conscience (sc. consciousness) of all', which at present it cannot legitimately claim to be. The 'emergent evolution' of Reason has been described, especially in II. 44 foll., 863 foll., III. 195 foll., IV. 112 foll.; and its essential nature as 'the idea of Order' was asserted above l. 845.

1079. *the Greek sage*: Aristotle.

1080-1137. The section on the nature of the human mind ends with these paragraphs on 'Religion', which is here identified with that reasonable faith in the 'omniscient Creator and First Cause' revealed to us by our conscious love of wisdom and beauty.

1080. *The attraction of this motion is our conscience of it*: 'this motion' is apparently the upward motion of Reason, into which we, as individuals, are attracted by our consciousness of it, in other words by 'our love of wisdom and of beauty'.

1084-1104. A crucial passage for the right understanding of the poet's own faith. God's

Being is thatt beauty and wisdom  
which is to be apprehended only and only approach'd  
by right understanding of his creation, and found  
in thatt habit of faith which some thinkers hav styled  
*The Life of Reason.*

This is the religion of Bridges and the *Testament of Beauty* is his attempt to expound it.

**1092.** *physically and metaphysically*: or, as we might say, in nature and logic. Bridges, as we have seen, insists upon the continuity of the universe, the Ring of Reality. See, in special illustration of this passage, ll. 91-154 above.

**1095.** Just as Duty 'aborted' into mere conventions and often horrible customs (ll. 225 foll. above), so Religion, properly 'joyful obedience with reverence to'ard the omnificent Creator' springing from the love of wisdom and beauty, has often aborted into 'dolorous superstition'. The syntax and sense of ll. 1099-1104 are obscure. The subject is 'man's animal mind', which both 'fenced' (in the past) 'his dark cave with codes of fearful fantasy' and still 'with credulous magic cloggeth his airy spirit and discrediteth his Reason and Faith alike'. The reason for this clogging, &c., is that 'man's animal mind' is 'flush'd by the stir of the irresistible impulse which drave him (yea, still driveth) with fierce exultation'. What is this exultant impulse, which is a 'barbarous aberration'—and aberration from what? Aberration from true religion or reasonable conduct perhaps. And the impulse which drives men with fierce exultation is perhaps the impulse to orgiastic worship of sensual or cruel types.

**1105-31.** The allusion to Lucretius and the development of the allusion into an independent criticism in ll. 1111-13, the ingenious return to the argument in ll. 1114-17, and the fresh development in ll. 1118-22 leading back again at l. 1123 to one of the original themes of the poem and so to the argument about superstition once more in ll. 1128-31—all this is in the poet's best manner. One is constantly tempted to say of him that his 'conduct' of his poem 'lies in masterful administration of the unforeseen' (cp. I. 6-7).

**1106-7.** The Latin means: 'So great a load of evils has Religion passed upon man's acceptance'.

**1110-13.** Lucretius, following Epicurus and Democritus, taught that the Universe consisted of innumerable atoms perpetually

Ruining along the illimitable inane,

as Tennyson renders the Latin, and clashing together to form whatever things there are. One of his principal objects was to rid man's mind of superstition, fear of gods, and death. Thus he 'made in the mind a second Void', says Bridges, playing on the word *inane*, 'the which his sect', i.e. all who followed him, whom Bridges identifies with materialist philosophers in general, 'should (sc. were to) keep inane' sc. empty of God, 'by the inventiv levity of their enlightenment', sc. by their philosophical theories of all sorts.

**1125.** *athirst for God*: Psalm xlii (Vulgate: *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus*).

**1130.** The 'old arrant exile' is, of course, Superstition, or rather Religion, inasmuch as she 'hid neath her cloak the master-key of happiness'.

**1138-1252.** Prayer. Thoughts on religion lead naturally to the thought of prayer and the reflection that it has never found a place in ethics, because religion has been abandoned by philosophy 'to priests and monks'. It is not correct to say that prayer has found no place in ethics, since Christianity and other religions have their ethics which certainly include Prayer. But it is true that most moral philosophy which does not start from an assumed revealed religion rejects the notion of Prayer as petition.

**1152-3.** Even if Prayer had no effect except upon the character and action of the person praying, it would still be a cause with its consequences, and so need to be taken account of even by a determinist philosophy. The statement is hypothetical. Bridges never actually approaches the old insoluble problem of 'fixt fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute', nor is he thinking of it here. The 'determin'd flux' is the course



of events as perceived or conceived by the human mind, in which course every event must have its cause.

1155. *a toilsome guerdon*: something won only as the reward of toil.

1171. *her*: sc. of Prayer.

1182-3. Man's 'best earthly delight' is beauty—in this instance the beauty of language; 'his heav'nliest desire' is holiness. The first part of the following quotation is from Psalm xliii, the second part (l. 1186) from Psalm xlviii.

1189-1217. Cp. 1047 foll. above. Bridges was very much occupied with the psychology of crowds.

1193-5. An idea which infects the crowd will propagate itself to the elimination of all other ideas. The supposed idea in A will 'embrace affinity', i.e. join its kindred idea in B, and so on from B to C, C to D, &c., each new recipient of the idea being 'its host'.

1229. *solemnel*: a rare and obsolete variant of 'solemn', not quoted in *O.E.D.* after the seventeenth century.

1230. The word 'faith' is unfortunately omitted after 'tribal' in the 2nd edition.

1234-6. The philosophic spectator, imagined since l. 1208, feels the exaltation of these wild Moslems his own all the more because he 'comprehends' it, has a deeper understanding and appreciation of what religious fervour and aspiration imply. The fact that he so comprehends their emotion makes it impossible for him to be 'a part thereof' and in that sense makes him 'incomprehensible'—a mere play on words. The last line means 'and the pools whereat the herd water are muddied pools', i.e. the actual beliefs of the crowd are full of superstition and error.

1238. The humility of prayer is the robe which intellect wears in modesty and fellow-feeling with ordinary less intellectual humanity.

1241. *manners*: ways, habits: but the word is used with a

suggestion of the meaning 'good manners', the 'use and duty of fellowship' of the next line.

**1249-52.** What is the meaning of 'the need of this mystery'?

The mystery is clearly the fact that 'ideas born to human personality from soul to soul pass freely'. From the words 'compelling belief' in l. 1251 I suppose the meaning to be that those who set the clause about the Communion of Saints in the Creed did so because they knew the need of a belief in this mystery in order to 'fold the sheep in pastures of eternal life' (l. 1252), i.e. to feed the faithful on earth with the assurance of their fellowship with the Saints in heaven. For the internal rime in l. 1250 see the Introduction, p. xxxix.

**1253-67.** The conclusion of the section on the Mind of man—and an austere conclusion. As the 'thinking machinery' perishes with the rest of the body, so all thought must perish, unless there is a further stage (or stages?) of 'emergent evolution', in which our spiritual life reaches the goal of consciousness, 'where', in the words of ll. 128-30 above which closely resemble this passage,

the spirit of man  
escaping from the bondage of physical Law  
re-entereth eternity by the vision of God.

In the first paragraph here (ll. 1253-61) the poet is contemplating body and mind and spiritual life in general; in the second (ll. 1262-7) the individual person. He asserts his belief that the individual mind perishes with its body unless the personality of the individual has reached a stage of Being higher than animal life. Unless there is this distinction between the two paragraphs the second is merely a repetition of the first. Bridges does not seem to have faced the question how it is possible for the human personality to have discarded 'animal life' altogether before the death of the body—the practical problem of the Indian ascetics. He is on the one hand always resolved not to go beyond the evidence of the facts as we know them—the scientific point of view: hence

the assertion that the mind perishes with the body. On the other hand, his 'loving response to the beauty of nature', his consciousness of spiritual influences, and the theory of God or Reality which he has built upon these facts of his own self-consciousness, compel him to beliefs which transcend the facts open to scientific investigation. He seems to attempt some sort of reconciliation of this contradiction by distinguishing between those personalities which reach a certain, but obviously indefinable, point of spiritual development in this life and those which do not; an attempt in essence the same as that of theologians to establish a 'judgment' between 'the sheep and the goats'. Needless to say, he is here, like his philosophical compeers, 'moving about in worlds not realized'.

1254-5. *animal thought with all its whimper and giggle* is a very vivid expression of the poet's half-humorous contempt for average humanity; but one cannot help remembering that on the evolutionary hypothesis, which Bridges heartily accepts, 'animal thought with its expressions of pain and pleasure' is a necessary stage.

1257. *all personality of all other ideas*: sc. the personalizations of ideas, their embodiment or impersonation in individual human beings. So in l. 1263 'the personal co-ordination of its ideas' means 'the co-ordination of ideas in the personality of the individual'.

1268-1446. The close of the poem, introduced by a section (ll. 1268-1313) in which the poet, as it were, apologizes for his attempt to give an account of what cannot be grasped by human reason nor expressed in speech. He speaks of the tale he has told as a waking dream, which he has seemed to be telling 'so tellingly', but which he now realizes to have been merely one of Reason's old illusions—like the attempt of theologians to fill the gap between God and man with angels or that of astronomers to fill the gap between Jupiter and Mars with asteroids (ll. 1299-1304). He has been making his

own attempt to fill the gap between God and man, or to fill in the unseen and unknown parts of that order of the universe of which Reason cannot help inferring the existence from what is experienced. The outstanding fact of experience for the poet Bridges is Beauty, and he is convinced that 'Verily by Beauty it is that we come at wisdom' (l. 1305); but his attempt in this poem to justify and expound his conviction has further convinced him that it is a mystery and that we do not come at Beauty by Reason. So it is time for him to stop; for Beauty is the Testament of God's love; and 'not the Muse herself can tell of Goddes love' (l. 1314). This line begins the actual *coda* of this magnificent poem, in which the poet repeats some of his most deeply felt ideas, and, while retaining his firm hold on facts and logic, ends in a passionate strain of spiritual exaltation.

1279-80. The 'mortal distress' was the death of the poet's daughter, Margaret, the wife of H. W. B. Joseph, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of New College, Oxford.

1329. Cp. especially II. 462 foll.

1331-4. 'the sensible images' are the images or appearances (phenomena) which are perceived by the senses. The child receiving these sense impressions in all simplicity, 'in the grace and beauteous attitude of infantine wonder' (ll. 1327-8), 'is apt' owing to that infantine wonder which is a proof of his inborn potentiality of love of Beauty (cp. I. 328-30, 622-5; II. 462 foll.) 'to absorb Ideas' (the 'essential Ideas' previously described, especially ll. 893 foll. above, where note 'absorb' and 'all ideas come to him thru' the senses) 'in primal purity'. But 'with the growth of understanding' the sensible images become 'more and more corrupt', sc. blurred and destroyed, 'troubled by questioning thought, or with vainglory alloy'd'.

1337. *the fall of Ev'ryman*: an allusion to the famous 'Morality' Play of that name.

1337-68. *a second call of nature's Love*: this, as we find in the

following paragraph, is that emotional state of the adolescent of which the most obvious and familiar example is what is usually called 'First Love'. Bridges uses the phrase 'first Love' both here and at III. 798, but (here certainly) in a sense wider than the usual, to mean in fact the re-awakening of the soul to Beauty whether in Nature or Art or Friendship or Love in the narrower sense. This becomes evident as we read on, and makes the transition to the subject of Friendship at l. 1369 less abrupt than it would otherwise be; even so it is abrupt, though we must remember that 'friendship' as treated here by no means excludes the friendship of lovers provided their love is of sufficient purity. Cp. note on l. 1371 below.

1338. It is rather puzzling to find nature here printed without a capital, but in l. 1348 with one. Bridges is very inconsistent in his use of capitals, particularly in this word. Here the most that can be said for the variation is that in 'nature's Love' no emphasis is laid upon the personification of 'nature': the phrase means 'the Love which is part of his nature'. Yet one cannot help contrasting the phrase with 'Goddess-love' in l. 1314 (note 'love' without the capital), though it is the same 'love' or 'Love' in both, which comes first from the Mother's embrace (l. 1315) and then with a second call here in l. 1337-8.

1343. *suasion*: sc. of others. *stubbornness of heart*: sc. of the adolescent himself, who may attempt to steel his heart against all tender emotion.

1346. *forestalling its full flood*: sc. in the complete love of the full-grown man or woman. The following lovely lines describe the emotion of 'first love' before it has developed into such a *grande passion*.

1351. *tendernesses*: 1st ed.: *tenderness*: 2nd ed., by an unfortunate misprint.

1353-6. *whose evanescence is the seal of their glory*: sc. because as they disappear they carry us with them in rapture into a

premonition of eternity, as they seem to be themselves 'consumed in self-becoming of eternity', sc. revelations of eternity in flashes of time.

1355-6. The ecstasy of these lines is heightened by the reminiscence of Faust's famous cry (*Faust*, Part I. l. 1699):

Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen:

'Verweile doch! du bist so schön!' . . .

and the fulfilment (Part II. l. 11581):

Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen:

'Verweile doch! du bist so schön!'

1371. Both here and in ll. 1380-1, the poet implies that the bond of friendship of which he has been thinking is 'breed'—a further proof of the underlying connexion of these paragraphs on friendship with the preceding passage on love. We have already been told in II. 107 foll., 125 foll., that 'breed' and 'selfhood' are closely linked in love, whether that of parent and child or of lovers or friends: the highest forms of love and friendship spring ultimately from the instinct of parenthood, which 'tho' it own cousinship with Breed, was born of Selfhood' (II. 107-8).

1373. *No friendless man . . . can be truly himself*: this appears to be, after Bridges' fashion, not a verbal quotation, but a paraphrase of Aristotle's remarks to the same effect in the *Ethics*, Bk. IX, ch. ix.

1382. *our politick*: our social ethics. Bridges is using the term in its Greek sense: ἡ πολιτική was the theory of right relations between men as citizens, the city-state (πόλις) being the only form of society contemplated as affording the opportunity for right relations or 'the good life'.

1385. *vastidity*: Bridges presumably borrowed this word from Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, III. i. 68. The associations of the words 'vast' and 'vasty' being what they are, it seems a strange lapse or waywardness of judgement for the great leader of the Society for Pure English to go out of his way to propagate the use of so barbarous a form.

1387. *the great moralist* is Aristotle once more. The reference is to *Ethics*, VIII. 7.5.

1392-3. Christ's humanity, Christ's human nature, is the personalization or impersonation of God, 'the very self-essence of love' (l. 1439 below). 'In him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead' (as St Paul wrote to the Colossians, ii. 9) in human personality. He bridges the gap between God and man, so that friendship with God is seen to be no impossibility; nay, in communion with Christ we share in the divine life.

1418. 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches', St. John's Gospel xv. 5.

1419-20. God's love is inescapable as being the environment of nature to which we are born. The next two lines are the last example of the poet's abrupt, sardonic manner of breaking off a paragraph; 'ill-natured' of course means not merely 'bad-tempered' or 'spiteful', but 'of an inferior kind of personality'.

1423. *This Individualism*: this ideal of life, which is an ideal for each individual, the sublimation of his instincts of Selfhood and Breed under the guidance of conscious Reason towards the vision of Beauty and the Wisdom of God. The very highest element in this individual ideal is love or friendship, the bond of society. Hence 'this Individualism is man's true Socialism', the ideal of a Communion of human persons in the life of love.

1428. The reference is of course to St. Paul's famous chapter xiii of 1 Corinthians. 'The wayward Visionary' merely means him who saw the Vision on the way to Damascus. It is characteristic of Bridges to defy, by ignoring, the inevitable association of both words with unfavourable criticism. It is certain that no such criticism is implied here.

1430. *only deathless athanasian creed*: a play upon the name Athanasius ('deathless'), as is shown by the word being

written without a capital. The Athanasian creed, the poet implies, is not true to the name of its reputed author: the only creed deserving the name of deathless is 'the Church's first hymn', 1 Corinthians, xiii.

**1436.** *the Soul returneth the body's loving where it hath won it.* These words cannot be taken literally. The poet means that where some Personality of spiritual beauty has by this beauty, which may or may not be partly revealed in bodily graces, won the instinctive, natural, in part at least sensuous, love of another Personality of less spiritual development, the higher Personality returns the love of the lower; and in this way God loves the world of men, returns their love which, imperfect though it is, has been won by the vision of his own Beauty.





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